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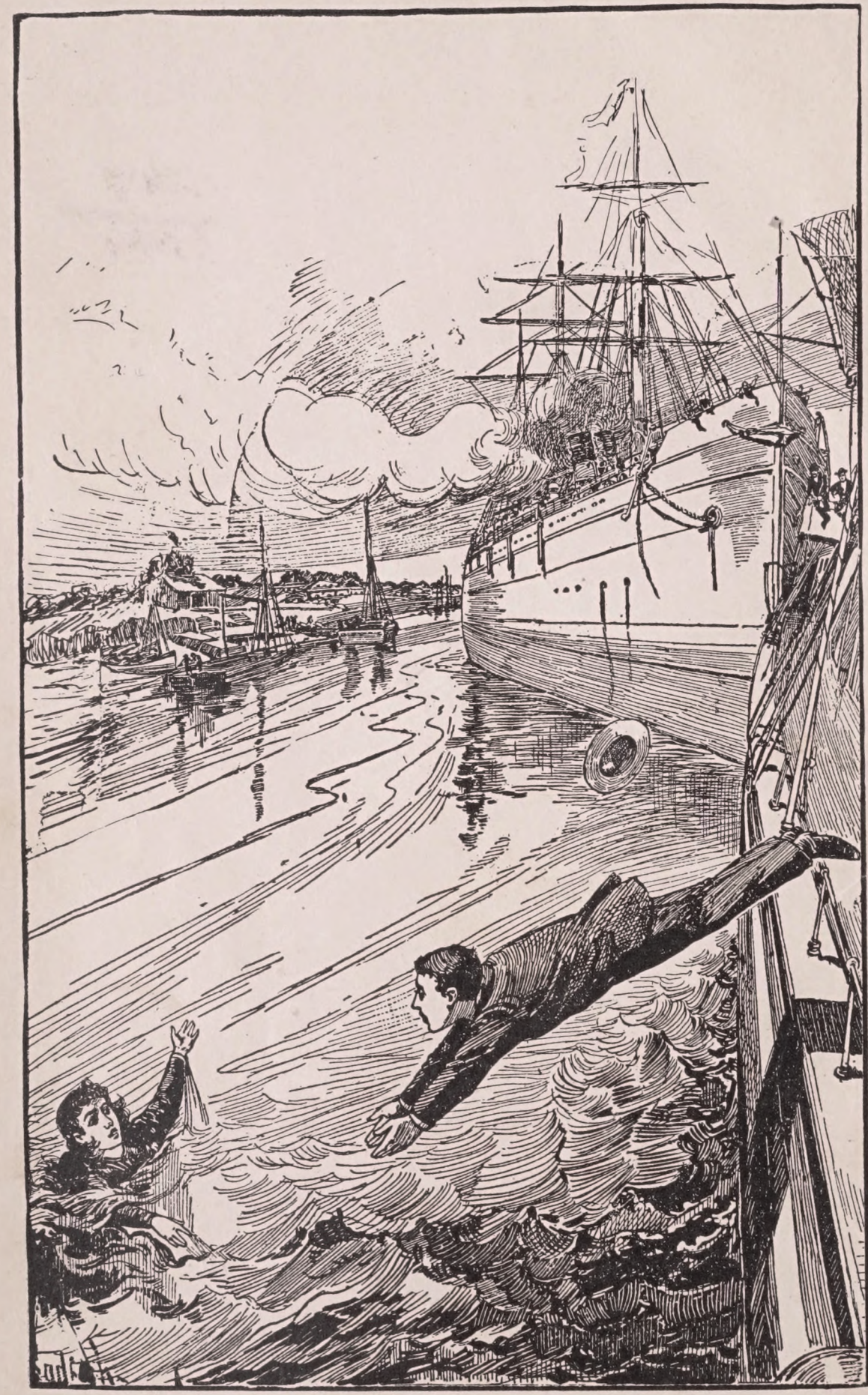

"Jack jumped to the rescue." See page 57.

The Treasure of the Golden Crater

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BY
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AUTHOR OF
"Won at West Point," "Cadet Kit Carey," "Lieutenant Carey's Luck,"
"Kit Carey's Protege," etc.

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The Treasure of the Golden Crater

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THE TREASURE OF THE GOLDEN CRATER.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVOLUTION.

"Come this way, Lovering. Quick! before the crowd leaves the coaches."

"Hold on, Jack; don't be in a hurry. I want to see how these fellows pan out as soldiers. They were shoemakers and plowboys a few hours ago, and a musket must be an unknown quantity in their hands."

"That is just the reason I want to get out of the way," laughed the first speaker, Jack Gordon, as he turned back to await his companion. "They might have them loaded and cocked for all we know, and I am not anxious to become a target for an Argentine bullet to-night. Let us get a little nearer the wall, if possible, the crowd is too dense here."

While speaking, Gordon forced a passage to the place he had indicated by a vigorous use of his elbows and a light traveling satchel he carried in his right hand, closely followed by Lovering, who applied a similar piece of luggage to the same use.

It was a fine night in the middle of June. The central railway station of Buenos Ayres was crowded to the ut-

most of its limited capacity. Every square foot of the narrow platform facing the tracks had been utilized, and the overflowing even extended out through the waiting-room into the broad Pasco de Julio fronting the tracks.

It was not an orderly throng of peaceful citizens taking the train for their suburban homes, but a rushing mob of soldiers—infantrymen in heavy marching order; cavalrymen conspicuous for their enormous native spurs; artillerymen without cannon, and a preponderance of belaced officers ablaze with gold and tinsel.

Early that morning the authorities of the city had been electrified by the intelligence that one of the principal barracks had been attacked and captured by an armed force under the leadership of a political opponent of the president. It was the signal for a general revolution all over the country, and the government, taken unawares, was making strenuous efforts to collect its loyal forces in the capital. Train after train had arrived at the station since dark, from Rosario and adjacent towns, and the small depot soon assumed the appearance described above.

Just as the illuminated clock in the tower overhead was striking eight, one of the "specials" had rolled in, preceded by ear-piercing shrieks of the whistle, and the cheers of the assembled throng. It bore a general of high rank and his personal staff, who had been hurriedly called to the front when it became evident the revolt was growing.

From the baggage car next the tender two young men, clad in ordinary civilian costume, leaped to the platform and looked around them. They were Jack Gordon, naval

cadet of the United States Steamship *Wampum*, and Assistant Surgeon George Lovering, of the same vessel.

The two young officers had been up country on a furlough, and were heartily enjoying themselves out shooting on the prairie, when a peremptory telegram from the captain started them back post haste. It was only by rare good luck they secured transportation in Rosario, as the passenger service on the railroads were withdrawn, and everything turned over to the military. A casual acquaintance with one of the native officials gained them the privilege, and so, after several delays and false alarms on the road, they found themselves in Buenos Ayres.

The *Wampum* was moored in the Boca, a small port on the southern outskirts of the city. They intended to report on board at once, but Lovering's curiosity caused a delay which ultimately led to some very peculiar results.

From their post of vantage next the wall, Gordon and Lovering looked upon a spectacle not very edifying to one versed in military lore. After the soldiers had piled out of the coaches, they stood huddled together like a flock of frightened sheep, until, at the sound of a bugle, an attempt was made to form double ranks. Both the alignment and the "marshaled heroes" were ragged. The variety of uniforms presented would have put to shame a mardi-gras festival, and, if the wearers themselves did not notice the fact, it was plainly apparent to the young officers, who with difficulty repressed a hearty laugh at the maneuvers.

"Let us get out of this," at last said George. "I pity the poor chaps, after all. They will only make food for

powder, and it is an outrage that the ambitious schemes of a few men can drag the honest, hard-working laboring classes into death and misery."

"Such has been the case since history began," replied Jack, sententiously, starting to work his way toward the entrance. "But say, doc, there is an officer over there who has been eying us ever since we arrived. Look! that red-faced man next the door. He is coming this way now, and—why, he has a guard with him!"

They both stopped. Rapidly approaching them was an elderly official bearing the insignia of a colonel commandant on his sleeve. He appeared excited, and in great haste.

"Senores," he exclaimed in Spanish, speaking quickly, and drawing a portentious-looking document from his pocket, "I am compelled to conscript you for immediate service. This paper, signed by his excellency, the president, orders me to impress every man capable of bearing arms, found on the public ways, if they cannot prove themselves aliens. Do you claim to be foreigners, and can you prove it at once?"

The question was so palpably absurd that Gordon and the surgeon stared at him in amazement for a moment, then, turning to each other, burst into a hearty laugh. Their merriment was of brief duration, however. The colonel glared at them angrily, then, in a voice of thunder, ordered several soldiers, standing near by in evident readiness, to advance.

At the first sign of hostile demonstration, the two young officers became grave, then Jack strode up to the

irate commandant and asked, in the same language, with some heat:

"Senor, am I to understand that this is serious? Do you really mean to force us to act as soldiers in the ranks of your company?"

"Preposterous, sir!" interrupted Lovering, contemptuously shaking off a detaining hand placed on his shoulder by one of the guards, and, confronting the official, he continued: "This is a farce not to our liking, sir. We are naval officers from the United States Steamship *Wampum*, lying at the Boca, and you will please cease this pleasantry at once, or the outrage shall be reported. Come, Gordon, do not bandy further words with him."

"All right, George," replied the young cadet in English, "but I say, old fellow, I believe we will have trouble before we get out of this. That man is growing wrathy. Hadn't we better explain how we happen to be here at this time? You know that during these periodical revolutions they carry things with a high hand, and I don't believe they would hesitate to do even worse than to make us help fight their foolish battles."

Before Lovering could reply, the Argentine officer interposed, and commanded the corporal to conduct them to an adjacent barracks. By this time the party was surrounded by a large crowd of officials and soldiers. Several younger officers joined the commandant, and it was evident by their hostile actions that they coincided with that worthy in his determination.

Jack had stepped to the side of his friend and, dropping his satchel to the floor, stood with clenched fists. It was

a striking tableau, and one very liable to turn into a tragedy. To make matters worse, the sound of heavy firing came from the direction of the city. Rattle after rattle of musketry, the occasional deep reports from field artillery, and with every lull a series of noises not unlike the morning serenade of a menagerie—the voice of the people.

George Lovering quickly saw the wisdom of his companion's advice about explaining matters as much as possible. It was necessary to do something at once, or else there would be witnessed a strange anomaly—American officers forced to fight under a foreign flag. It was an outrage not to be tolerated, so, obedient to a rather quaint nature, he calmly took a cigar from his pocket, lighted it, and after a quiet puff or two, said, blandly:

"Now, look here, senor; you are wasting valuable time impressing two very poor soldiers. Those significant sounds from the front no doubt appeal strongly to your martial bosom, and I am loath to offer any obstacle to your impending feast of enjoyment. Permit me to briefly explain the situation: This gentleman is Naval Cadet Gordon, of the American Corvette *Wampum*, carrying ten guns, all breechloaders, and ready for action at any moment, and I am Assistant Surgeon Lovering, of the same vessel. We have been up country on a month's leave of absence, but, hearing of the revolution, made haste to return to our ship. We were detained at Rosario by lack of transportation, but, through the courtesy of Lieutenant Alvarado, of the artillery, were permitted to come by special train. I presume this explanation will be

sufficient? Shall we say *buenos noches* and success to you?"

The commandant's face was a study. When Lovering commenced his harangue, the officer had just raised his right arm with a last peremptory gesture, but, amazed beyond measure at what he thought was the cool impudence of the other, he kept it elevated until at last it dropped by degrees to its natural position.

His countenance grew more fiery at every word, and, when George concluded with the salutation, he choked out an answer remarkable for its wealth of Spanish expletives. However, they interpreted it to be a demand for ocular proof of their identity—a paper or commission bearing their names and rank.

CHAPTER II.

IMPRESSED INTO SERVICE.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Gordon, turning to the young surgeon with a blank face. "What does the beggar mean? Is it possible the man is serious? Why, I haven't the sign of a rag with my rank on it, have you?"

"Nothing but a letter without the envelope," replied Lovering, shrugging his shoulders, "and that's in English, of course. I believe he is in dead earnest, and we run a good chance of smelling powder before morning. However, take it cool, and if they try to force us away, go under protest. It would be madness to offer physical resistance to this mob. By the way, the colonel seems to be under the influence of liquor, and that will partially explain his outrageous conduct. Here, I will have another go at him.

"Senor," to the commandant, "what you ask is impossible just at present. We have nothing to prove our identity. In fact we labored under the delusion that in a free republic like this it was not necessary to carry one's personal history on a placard for the edification of the authorities. If you will kindly send some one to the ship with us it will be easy to convince you."

"No! no! Too much time has already been wasted. The city is in a state of siege and martial law prevails.

This paper empowers me to act as I see fit, and I will certainly compel you to serve in the defense of the government. If you can afterward prove what you say, his excellency will no doubt make reparation. I will be considerate enough to advise you to go quietly, else——" The accompanying gesture was highly suggestive, and one not lost on the two young Americans. They were certainly sensible enough to see that the best plan would be to submit to the inevitable, and to trust to an escape afterward.

To argue further with the commandant in his present condition was not to be thought of. He evidently regarded his power under the document granted by the president as but little short of that worthy's own, without the responsibility incurred therewith, and the potent effect of unlimited liquor had also added its usual quota to his bumptiousness.

The situation bore a tinge of ludicrousness only exceeded by its absurdity, and would not have been possible under any other circumstances. The excitement aroused by the revolution, and the lawless character of most South American armies during interstate trouble had caused the outrage.

Absurd or not, the fact impressed itself on Gordon and Lovering that obey they must; so, submitting with as good grace as possible, they fell in between two lines of soldiers and marched out of the station.

Ten minutes had not elapsed since the arrival of their train, but in that time two others had rolled into the depot, bringing regiment after regiment of the provin-

cial guards. It was evident that the revolution, only in existence since early morning, had assumed unusual proportions, and from the hubbub plainly discernible outside there promised to be hot work before long.

"If it wasn't for the fact that we are forced to go, Doc, I would rather enjoy the chance of seeing action," said Jack, as they reached the door. From the look of professional enthusiasm on his manly face, he meant it. He had not found much warlike experience since entering the service three years previous, and, from all appearances, he would have spent thrice his nineteen years of age before seeing a gun fired in hostile combat. Now, the military preparations in progress around him, and the close proximity of a real live engagement made him a willing defender of Argentine's threatened capital.

Both he and George Lovering were from the same Western State, and their friendship had commenced in the common schools of their mutual birthplace. George entered a medical college, and on graduating gained admission into the medical department of the navy. On his advice young Jack applied to the district Congressman for permission to compete at the local examination for the appointment to Annapolis, and won it. After spending three years in the historic old school, learning not only the science of navigation and a multitude of other needful arts, but also how to be and to remain always a gentleman, with all that the much-abused word implies, he was sent to sea on the same vessel George had been ordered to. Thrown together in the close inter-

course of ship life, their boyish friendship was strengthened, and it worked to the well-being of both.

The *Wampum* had been several months on the South Atlantic station when the revolution broke out. There had been rumors of trouble current for some time, but little heed was paid to them, as the politics of our sister republics are seldom quiet; so when Gordon and Lovering asked for leave it was granted at once. The reader knows the subsequent results.

As Jack and the young surgeon emerged on the Paseo de Julio with their guard, a troop of cavalry dashed off in the direction of the plaza, but, wheeling before the government house was reached, came thundering back, followed by a shrieking shell, which burst in the midst of the rear platoon, unhorsing a score.

An excited lieutenant, leading the retreat, jumped to the ground with a haste which sent him on his hands and knees, but, quickly scrambling erect, he rushed wildly into the station, shouting:

"The fleet has revolted and is opening fire!"

The effect was magical. In the space of a moment the depot was empty. Struggling, scrambling through doors and windows, irrespective of companies or batteries, the soldiers darted from the spot and fled up Calle Piedad with a unanimous destination—the other side of the city.

Gordon and Lovering were at first carried away by the rush, and found themselves half-way up the street before being able to escape from the terror-stricken mob; but by dint of hard work they managed to slip into a convenient

doorway, where they crouched in the darkness, listening with bated breath to the tumult of the retreat.

"Well," whispered Jack, after they had waited several minutes in silence, "this is a pretty go, to say the least. What on earth can have gotten into these people? I never saw such cowards."

"Sh-sh-sh!" warned Lovering, forcing the middy further back into the dim recesses of the hallway. An unusual light had suddenly superseded the blackness of the night—a red glare like that of an extensive conflagration, and the crackling of flames could be heard even above the rumble of the distant conflict. The shells of the fleet had done their deadly work.

To the young officers this threatened exposure of their hiding-place was far from pleasant. The experience of the last few minutes had plainly shown them that a sojourn in the erstwhile peaceful city of Buenos Ayres was but little different from an enforced residence in Bedlam.

They did not object to a little fighting, because that was strictly in their line of business, but, as their old admiral had once said, "When you fight, my son, let it be under the glorious Stars and Stripes, and then fight like thunder." They were both capable of fighting like "thunder" when they had a patriotic interest in the combat, but their imperative orders to report on board the *Wampum* without loss of time caused them to think of returning at once.

To do that required a passage through a large part of the city, and a walk of at least an hour in the very center of the disturbed quarter. All local trains connecting with the Boca, where the vessel lay, had been taken off

several hours previous, and a carriage could not be obtained at any price. The only way left was to stick to the byways and hug the friendly shade of every secluded thoroughfare.

Their present quarters were but little better than the open street as regards concealment. The flames from a burning building just across the way cast a ruddy glow into the hall, rendering them plainly visible to any passer-by.

"Let us leave this and try for the Boca," suggested the young surgeon, after this fact became apparent. "I don't think we will see anything more of our esteemed friend, the commandant; by this time he ought to be clear of the city. Did you notice him in that crowd running up the street?"

"Yes, I saw him. I think the fright he received from that shell will cool his martial ardor for a while. But which road had we better take? I believe a dash across the plaza, then by way of the Calle Defensa to General Brown is the safest."

"It's rather open to the fleet."

"Oh, I don't care a rap for the shells. You only take the chances of war of getting hit by one, whereas a man pointing a gun at you has a target in sight."

"Right you are, Jack," coincided Lovering, with a quiet laugh at the middy's philosophy. "Of two evils choose the least, eh? Come on."

Leaving the hallway, they paused for a moment at the portal, and glanced up and down Calle Piedad. Not a soul was in sight. The entire street seemed bare and de-

serted, but from the obscurity of the upper end came an occasional rattle of firearms. The fire across the way was still burning briskly, so they made haste to leave the neighborhood.

Beyond the railway station for several hundred yards was a space clear of buildings and open to the harbor. Through this they could see the dim outlines of several vessels crawling along the inner shoals, and every now and then illuminating the night by a momentary flash of red flame. The distant report of modern rifles came to their ears, an afterlude to the spiteful whir of the shells as they flew past overhead. Cries of anguish or terror came borne on the wavering breeze from adjacent houses, and to put a finishing touch to the scene of carnage, a battery of government artillery unlimbered their pieces in the very center of the park, and fired haphazard down the various ways diverging therefrom.

"We cannot get past the plaza here," cried Gordon, calling a halt under the protecting walls of the government house. "It would be certain death to run the gantlet of that mob. We will have to go back and up Piedad a couple of blocks."

Keeping close to the buildings, they walked hastily along the street they had just left, and, turning a corner several squares distant from the station, ran unexpectedly into a barricade of cobblestones stretched across the road. Before they had time to retreat a voice challenged them.

"*Quien viva?*" (Who comes there?)

"Friends, foreigners," quickly replied Lovering, but in an instant several armed men had scrambled over the

breastworks, and, despite their resistance, dragged them into the temporary fortification. Once inside, a gun was thrust into their hands, and a dark-faced man with a blood-stained bandage tied around his head, apparently the captain, sternly bade them fire when directed.

"And remember," he added with a scowl, "that the second either of you shows sign of treachery, you will be shot down like dogs."

"You will have to pay for this outrage," expostulated Jack, hotly. "We are naval officers from the *Wampum,* and don't intend to fight your battles for you. Release us this instant or the American consul will be notified, and reparation demanded at the muzzle of a gun."

"That for your consul and your guns!" responded the officer, snapping his fingers derisively. "Here you are, and you will have to fight or suffer the consequences. Anyway, how do I know you are Yankees. I have only your word for it, and you speak Spanish like natives. But probably you are too cowardly to——"

Before he could finish the sentence Gordon sprang on him like a tiger. Both went down together under the force of the attack, and rolled from side to side of the narrow space. It was so sudden that George did not have time to interfere. Now, seeing the great danger the middy had placed them in, he hurriedly cocked his rifle and shouted:

"Keep back! I will kill the first man that interferes!"

The barricade was crowded with men. It was probably that fact only which saved the young officers. For a moment everybody was mixed up in indescribable con-

fusion, and the pandemonium could be heard blocks away. Then, to the great relief of the surgeon, Jack scrambled to his feet apparently unhurt, but with clothes torn almost into tatters. Catching up a musket lying close at hand, he called to Lovering to follow him, and jumped over the barricade. Once on the other side they both crouched flat on the ground. It was just in time. A perfect hailstorm of bullets flew over their heads, striking the adjacent houses. Amid the crashing of glass and the angry spat of the lead as it struck the adobe walls, came a ringing cheer. Then, to the terror and consternation of the soldiers inside, a volley rang out from the roof of a two-story mansion immediately abreast, mowing them down like grain before a reaper.

For a brief space the men caught in the trap remained motionless with surprise, then all who were left alive rallied and made for the house. Once under its walls, all danger from the sharpshooters above was past. With them went Gordon and Lovering, equally as anxious to get out of the way of the leaden hail.

It was apparent that the opposition party, learning of the barricade thrown up on this particular street, had established one of their famous cantonments on the roof just overhead, and, seeing their chance when the disturbance took place, opened fire with disastrous effect. The construction of the houses in Buenos Ayres—in fact, in all South American cities—renders this manner of street fighting peculiarly effective. The memorable defeat of the English general, Havelock, who, on entering the city with his forces, was almost annihilated by sharp-

shooters stationed on the flat housetops, is a case in point. The narrow width of the streets converted them into defenseless shambles.

The situation of the young officers was a little better than before. They were huddled together with a score of government soldiers, the leader of whom was the man Jack had just assaulted. He had scrambled erect immediately after the middy, and was now one of the party under the sheltering walls, but apparently all animosity had disappeared. From his actions and language he was endeavoring to induce his command to storm the cantonment. The door leading to the interior was directly before them, and it would, from all appearances, take but few blows to open it. Grasping a gun from one of his men, the captain commenced to beat on the panels, at the same time ordering others to his assistance.

He was speedily obeyed, and under their united efforts the door gave way, revealing a short hallway leading to a flight of steps. With a shout the soldiers disappeared into the interior, leaving Jack and the surgeon at the portal.

"Now is our chance to escape," exclaimed the latter, looking hastily up and down the street. "Come on, Jack. By keeping close to the houses we can slip around the corner and——"

He was suddenly interrupted by a cry for help coming from above. It was the voice of a woman, and immediately following came a wild scream which sent the hot blood into their faces. With one accord they abandoned their plan of escape, and ran toward the stairs.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS PACKAGE.

The interior of the place was dark, but, after reaching the second floor, they saw a partially opened door from which streamed a flood of light. Heavy trampling overhead indicated that the soldiers were endeavoring to reach the roof, and presently the crash of glass and a triumphant cheer showed that they had succeeded. Then came the sharp report of numerous rifles, groans and curses, and the sounds of the deadly conflict continued.

Gordon and Lovering made for the light on reaching the top of the stairs, but one rapid glance showed that the room was empty. Several doors leading out of it were hastily examined, with the same results. They stood nonplused, waiting for some sound that would lead them to the person evidently in peril, but nothing could be heard save the hubbub created above.

"Suppose we search the front rooms," suggested Jack, "and if we cannot find any person we'll take a look on the roof."

"It is very queer," replied George, as he followed the middy. "I am sure the cries came from up here."

The house was evidently inhabited by people well off in worldly goods. All the furniture seemed of the richest description, and a cultured taste was shown by various bric-a-brac adorning every apartment.

The room facing the street opened from the hall, and directly opposite it was a narrow flight of steps leading to the roof. Gordon tried the knob of the door, and found it locked. He was just turning away, when a masculine voice from within called out in Spanish:

"Dare to enter and I will fire. I am armed, and will defend myself to the last. Go your way; we have nothing to do with this disgraceful revolution."

The words were spoken with a decided English accent.

Jack and Lovering exchanged glances.

"Answer him," motioned the surgeon.

The middy first knocked, and then replied:

"We are officers from the United States steamship *Wampum*, and, happening to hear some one calling for help, came up to see if we could render any assistance."

"Thank Heaven!" the voice exclaimed fervently, and the door cautiously opened a few inches; then it was thrown back, and an old man stepped into the hall. Behind him stood a young girl, not over seventeen. Her face was pale, and a frightened look about the eyes showed that it was probably she who had uttered the cry.

Gordon instinctively glanced down at his disheveled apparel, and bowed ceremoniously.

"My friend, Assistant Surgeon Lovering, and myself are at your service," he said, simply. "Have you been attacked by those soldiers?"

"Not attacked, but expecting to be at any moment," the old gentleman replied; then, stepping forward, he extended a hand to each, and added in a voice choked with emotion: "I am heartily glad to see you, sirs. My

daughter here and I are the only persons left in the house. Our cowardly servants fled at the first sign of danger, and we, not knowing where to take refuge, remained here. We thought the fighting would not come down this way, until that barricade was constructed toward evening. We then retired to an inner room to wait until morning, but it seems that a party of the revolutionists, having reached our roof from the adjacent houses, fired on the soldiers in the street.

"Although understanding by the sounds that they were above us, we did not anticipate danger until the government troops burst open the lower door and entered the house. We were then in a back room, but were driven out of it by four or five of the brutes, who, forcing the door on their way up, fired several shots at me. Luckily none of them took effect."

"Yes, luckily indeed," replied Lovering, with a glance at the young lady. "But they have almost ceased firing on the roof, or else the fight is transferred to another house. I only hear an occasional shot, and they seem fainter. As all danger is apparently past, I think I will run up and see if there are any poor wretches in need of a surgeon's aid. Jack, you had better remain here until I come back."

"You are an honor to your profession, sir," exclaimed the old gentleman, again shaking hands with Lovering. "It will be a worthy action. Here, take this revolver; you may need it. If we can do anything to help the wounded, just call down the stairs. Probably your friend had better go with you. I think we are safe here now,

and if anything has happened up there you will require assistance."

There was force in his argument, so the two young officers started above, leaving their new acquaintances to retire inside and await their return. On reaching the roof, Jack and Lovering tried, by the aid of a hand lantern they had brought with them, to see if any of the wounded had been left behind.

The night was still quite dark, but off toward the east a gradual brightening of the sky proclaimed the rising of a full moon. All sounds of the conflict had died away, and the neighboring housetops appeared to be deserted. The lamp's rays did not penetrate very far, so they proceeded cautiously to examine every part of the roof.

Jack went ahead with the light, and Lovering walked close behind, listening intently. Suddenly the middy stumbled and almost fell. As he recovered himself the object against which his foot had struck moved slightly, and they heard a feeble groan.

"By Jove! It's a wounded man," exclaimed George, taking the lantern and stooping over so he could see his face. Then, instinctively placing his hand on the man's pulse, he continued: "What is the matter? Where are you hurt?"

For a moment there was no answer. The injured soldier, for so he seemed to be, breathed heavily, and moaned with pain, then, slightly lifting his head after great exertion, replied, in Spanish:

"Oh! senores, for the love of humanity, bring me some water. I am dying. Here," putting his hand on his

breast, "a bullet struck me at the beginning of the fight, and I have been lying without aid ever since."

"Jack!" cried Lovering, but the middy had disappeared, and, almost as he spoke, returned with a cup of water and a little wine in a flask. Taking them from him, the young surgeon speedily poured a small quantity down the poor wretch's throat. The generous vintage had an immediate effect. Struggling into a sitting position, assisted by George, he appeared more easy.

Lovering started to open his shirt so as to try and check the bleeding, but he was interrupted by the man, who, after a violent fit of coughing, exclaimed:

"No use, senor, I am almost gone. In a few minutes I will be in a better world. But you have been kind to me, and kindness is something I have had little experience with in my life. I can make you rich, far beyond your wildest dreams. I am without family, and the secret which I have guarded for years would have died with me, but your friendly hand has changed my purpose. Here, cut this cord around my neck. Attached to it you will find a package sewed in leather, which will explain all."

"Never mind that, my man," expostulated Lovering. "Let me see if I can stop the hemorrhage."

"No, no! I tell you it will be useless. Do as I ask you; it is a dying man's request."

More for the purpose of humoring him than anything else, George held the lamp while Gordon drew a small, tightly wrapped package from underneath his shirt. It was curiously shaped, and looked very like a flattened

ball. The outer cover was of leather, with the sewed seams apparently varnished to exclude water. The soldier's eyes gleamed with satisfaction as he saw it.

"Do not open it now," he said, faintly. "Wait until I am gone, and may the knowledge you learn bring more to you than it has to me. My name is Manuel Garcia. I was born in Spain, and how I happened to—to——" His voice had grown so weak they could barely hear it; then it failed suddenly, and Lovering felt a convulsive motion of the body. He tried to force a little wine into his mouth, but it was too late, the man had breathed his last. After working over him a little while longer they reluctantly gave it up and returned to the floor below.

As they passed from the roof, a vagrant gust of wind brought to their ears the far-away sounds of musketry, and an occasional deep, sullen boom of cannon. To their joy and relief, it appeared to come from the other side of the city, away from the direction of the Boca. If the fighting had drifted that way, it would now be an easy matter to report on board the *Wampum*.

Their new acquaintances were awaiting them in the hall below, and seemed very glad they had returned in safety. The young girl appeared to have recovered from her previous terror, and greeted the two officers with a friendly smile. The old gentleman led the way to the front room. Before entering, George drew him to one side, and briefly explained what had happened on the roof, adding that the body had better remain there for the present.

"Now, I think it is time we introduced ourselves, gen-

tlemen," said their host, in a bluff, good-natured manner. "I am Silas Goodrich, an American from old Massachusetts, down here for a pleasure trip of several months, and this is my daughter Marie."

Gordon and Lovering bowed acknowledgments.

"I have heard of you, I think, Mr. Goodrich," replied the former. "Is not that your steam yacht moored astern of the *Wampum?*"

"Yes, that is mine. She is called the *Marie,* after my little girl here, and a more roomy and comfortable craft for her speed is not to be found afloat. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you aboard some day in the near future."

"Thank you; we shall certainly grasp the opportunity, as I admire her lines very much. But, speaking of the *Wampum* reminds me that we have not explained how we happen to be ashore at such a critical time."

The middy thereupon stated in a few words the events which led to their being present in Mr. Goodrich's house, and as he dwelt with a natural eloquence on the stirring adventures of the night, the fair young face of Marie brightened and glowed with an interest in the narrator and his theme which proved most flattering to him.

After several minutes more of mutual explanation, the conversation reverted to their present situation. Gordon and Lovering, although desirous of reporting on board from a sense of duty, yet felt it incumbent to remain in case another disturbance took place in that vicinity. On informing Mr. Goodrich of their intention, he expos-

tulated at first, but at last assured them of his feeling of greater security in their presence.

It was decided that the gentlemen should remain during the night, and for Marie to retire in an adjoining room, which she did with many protestations and declarations that she could not possibly sleep.

Presently, after their host had talked a while on Argentine politics and revolutions, a subject he seemed very familiar with, Jack happened to think of the package.

"I say, Lovering," he asked, suddenly, "have you shown Mr. Goodrich that leather affair we got from that poor fellow?"

"Not yet," replied George, taking it from his pocket. "I had almost forgotten it. Suppose we open the package now. I confess to a great curiosity concerning the contents."

Removing the outer cover after much labor, he disclosed to view a bundle of greasy and time-stained papers folded into a thick wad. All gathered around a center table, and the old gentleman lighted the entire chandelier in his eagerness. Lovering carefully separated the sheets and spread them out, side by side. The first was a rude map showing part of what seemed to be an island. It was marked by two crosses and a star, and in the upper corner was an explanation of the signs, written in a labored hand.

There were three other papers, ordinary English note, covered with a writing which zigzagged and scrawled in uneven lines. They had been numbered, but on comparing them it was found that four were missing.

"It is a shame!" exclaimed the middy, in a disappointed tone. "I am certain this means a very important secret, and here we are balked; but read what's there, George; maybe we can get an idea from them."

The young surgeon held the sheets close to the light, and with difficulty spelled out the following remarkable document:

BUENOS AYRES, July 14, 18—.

Being the only scholard in this hear party I'm asked to sett down and depose as to how the barque Santer Marier went ashore on terre del fueger and what happened us four seamen on that inhorspitabel coast, being all that wuz saved of the crew. The way it happened about wuz this. The old man, he's dead now and a blazing and more power to his elbow, put her on the beach hizself for the surance but he made a misteak and struck in the wrong place and got the worst of it. There wuz four on us whose names is below, who reached land all right. It wuz colder than a dog's nose and we liked to freezed at first but we scraped a fire and lived two days in sight of the Santer Marier's bones. Then striking inland to find a settlement of Indians we traveled a long time living on birds and what we could pick up and after days of suffering we got into an awful mess which no man would believe but it is like a night mare to me now and I will explain. We all tumbled down one day into a big pit which wuz hotter than the one where the skipper is and then a lot of funny looking people came and——

This was the end of the second sheet. Numbers three, four, five, and six were missing. Lovering picked up the remaining one and continued:

——counted as much as one thousand chunks of gold, reel old stuff, and we air not good at counting nuther. There wuz also stones which sparkled like fire, and other things. It's easy got at if you know how, and I won't say any more because this explanation is enuff and I wouldn't have writ it if that dago Garcia hadn't wanted it for some reason or other. We got away all right and I made a map to show how to git back. We four air

going to raise the stuff and git the gold, and the directions is on the map. Hear is our names.

BILL WILSON, carpenter.
JOHN CARNOW, able seamen.
JIM DUFFY, able seameen.
MANUEL GARCIA, ordinary seamen.

After George had ceased reading they sat silently looking at the papers and the map, then Mr. Goodrich arose to his feet and, slapping his hand on the table, exclaimed:

"Well, this is wonderful. If we only had the others, with a better explanation, I think the means to search for this treasure would be easily forthcoming."

He glanced significantly at his companions.

"By Jove! probably they are in his clothes," suggested Gordon, hastily; then, grasping the lantern, he rushed from the room. In less than five minutes they heard a clatter on the stairs, and the middy ran in, exclaiming:

"He is gone! The body isn't there!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE TREASURE COMPANY.

"The body not there?" echoed Lovering, incredulously. "Nonsense, Jack; the man couldn't have walked away. Perhaps you missed him in the dark?"

"No; I searched everywhere, and even looked on the roof next door. It is very queer."

"I do not remember hearing anybody walking overhead since the fight," said Mr. Goodrich, "but it is just possible some of his comrades might have returned to remove the dead. You know we have been pretty well occupied with this package of papers."

"That must be the case," returned George, taking up the sheets from the table and looking over them again. Suddenly he started and exclaimed: "Hello! what's this? Here is more writing on the back of the map. It is such a scrawl I can hardly make it out. What in the deuce is that word?"

Placing the paper flat on the table, all three tried to decipher several lines written, or, rather, printed in faded red ink. After considerable work they managed to piece together the following:

Bill Wilsun, January 3, B. Ayres, gun
Jno. Karnow, Jul. 7, Montavido, nife.
Jim Duffi, Jul. 7, Montavido, nife.

The trio glanced significantly at each other for a moment, then Jack spoke up, saying:

"The miserable scoundrel! He has murdered those men to secure the treasure for himself. He has richly deserved his fate, but it is a pity he didn't live to be hanged."

"That's so, by Jove!" exclaimed Lovering. "Well, well; we seem to be the legatees of a blood-stained, crime-strewn secret which has already caused the death of three men, and brought no luck to a fourth. I am not superstitious, but I think it would have been just as well if we had not fallen heir to it."

Prophetic words!

Old Mr. Goodrich had drawn up a chair close to the table, and was deeply intent in studying the contents of the mysterious package. He read every word slowly and carefully, then, bringing an atlas from the adjoining room, compared a map of Terra del Fuego, the southernmost land of the South American continent, with the crudely drawn map accompanying the papers.

After a while he leaned back in his chair, and, placing his hands together in a favorite attitude, pondered long and deeply. The young officers, noticing his preoccupation, remained silently watching him. For the first time since making his acquaintance they had an opportunity of closely observing the features of their new friend. He seemed to be a man of about fifty years, but it is possible the almost perfectly white hair falling in thick, wavy folds over his forehead gave him a more aged appearance than was really the case. The face was full and prepos-

sessing, and around the eyes were lines which are always associated with a generous and kindly nature. Gordon and George felt attracted to him at once, and when they next spoke, it was with an increased respect and liking.

Presently Mr. Goodrich stirred, and, removing his glasses, slowly wiped them, the while looking keenly at his companions.

"Now, my friends," he commenced, speaking deliberately and as if he had fully made up his mind, "I have a proposition to make; but first I want to ask a few questions. What do you think of this affair?"

Jack and Lovering exchanged glances, each waiting for the other to speak; then the middy, in obedience to a motion, acted as spokesman.

"I believe the thing is genuine, sir," he replied, emphatically. "You know the interior of Terra del Fuego is a *terra incognito*, and it might be immensely rich in minerals. As to the peculiar people the document speaks of, well, what do we know to the contrary?"

"Yes, and this Manuel Garcia would have no reason for lying that I know of," added Lovering, suggestively.

"I believe it is true, myself," admitted Mr. Goodrich, frankly. "Now, another question. Would it be possible for you boys to obtain a furlough of, say, six months, from the ship?"

"Easily, by telegraphing to the Navy Department at Washington, and giving a good reason," quickly replied Jack, seeing the drift of the old gentleman's queries. The very idea thus foreshadowed caused him to feel so

elated that he could have danced a jig on the center table. He waited eagerly for the next question.

"Well, will you, Mr. Gordon, and will you, Mr. Lovering, form a stock company with me to secure this treasure? Wait—hold a minute; what I mean by a stock company is one simply between ourselves. You two lads subscribe muscle and common sense, and I'll furnish the collateral."

"Will we? Whoop!" shouted Jack. As for George, all he could do was to sit and listen helplessly to the magician who had thrown open the gates to a realm of wealth in such a generous manner.

Mr. Goodrich leaned back and enjoyed the varying expressions on their faces with a zest not to be measured by words. Being a man whom the school of adversity had taught a quickness of decision, he had not required much time to decide the question. Moreover, he had taken a great liking to both, and was desirous of showing his appreciation of their assistance that night.

So far as he could judge at present, it might only mean a pleasant trip down south, and probably an excursion inland in a comparatively unknown country. His fifty odd years of life had not exhausted the leaven of romance in his nature, and it must be confessed that he even felt some of the joyousness of his younger companions.

"You need not answer, boys," he said at last. "I can see that you are perfectly willing, and——"

"Willing, sir," interrupted the middy, "why, I cannot thank you enough for your kindness and generosity. Even the chance of running down there and looking

around would be almost enough pleasure, not mentioning the possible lucre that paper speaks about."

"Mr. Goodrich," added Lovering, rising to his feet and grasping the old gentleman's hand, "I can hardly believe our good fortune is true. I think I can speak for both Jack and myself in saying that we accept your proposition in the spirit it is offered."

"Well, boys, you are entirely welcome," he replied, heartily; then, drawing his chair up to the table again, he readjusted his glasses and continued, laughingly: "Now that the stock company is formed, we had better name it and figure up our assets and liabilities. It is now one o'clock, and, as you intend staying until daylight, we shall have plenty of time to map out the whole affair. As for the assets, they will include a balance at the bank sufficient for our needs, and the steam yacht *Marie.*"

Jack's eyes sparkled at the last item.

"Now for a name. What do you say to 'The Terra del Fuegan Treasure Company, Limited?' That embraces about everything."

Of course there was not one dissenting vote, so that part of it was settled. After a further parley, Mr. Goodrich was elected president and treasurer, Lovering secretary and surgeon-in-ordinary of the expedition, and Jack manager and superintendent.

The old man had an object in view by this apparent by-play. He wished to make the young officers feel they were equally as interested financially as himself. He dwelt largely on the fact that the document belonged to

them, and also made a point by saying that it was simply a financial investment carrying certain risks.

During the balance of the night preliminary plans for setting out on the trip were perfected. It transpired that the *Marie* could not be ready for at least four weeks, as certain repairs on her engines were needed. That would give ample time for securing the furloughs and laying in stores.

Just before daybreak Mr. Goodrich drew up a formal document, embracing the statutes of the new company, which they all signed with much solemnity. This was folded and carefully placed together with the original papers in a strong box.

It was now growing light, and the yellow flame of the gas-jets were becoming garish and pale. During the past six hours only an occasional rumble from a great distance showed that the revolution still continued.

Gordon and Lovering concluded to leave early and report on board, promising to return that same day if possible. Not wishing to awaken Marie, they bade the old gentleman good-by, and quietly left the house. Jack had managed to repair his clothing sufficiently well to pass muster, and a hat borrowed from their host, several sizes too large for him, completed his rather startling costume.

CHAPTER V.

THE STEAM YACHT.

The street in front of Mr. Goodrich's house looked as if a cyclone had carried a devastating trail through it. Piles of cobblestones were scattered here and there in rude imitation of a barricade. The windows in almost every house lining each side were shattered, and pitting the plastered fronts of most were innumerable bullet-holes, conveying the peculiar appearance of a worm-eaten board.

There were few people astir, and the general expression of those would hardly lead one to believe that a desperate hand-to-hand fight had taken place in front of their doors only a few hours previously.

It is possible that revolutions in that periodically disturbed country had grown monotonous, and were no more taken notice of than political campaigns in the greater republic.

To Jack and the young surgeon this apathy was surprising, and as they hurried along, intent on obtaining some conveyance to the Boca, they almost doubted that the events of the night had really occurred. The sight, however, of several bodies lying huddled up at one side of a street crossing convinced them.

On reaching Calle Florida, the principal thoroughfare,

a cab was sighted jogging along as if in search of stray fares. They speedily induced the coachman to carry them at a rapid speed to their destination, arriving there, however, just in time to see the lofty masts of the *Wampum* passing through the lower channel, *en route* to the outer anchorage, seven miles distant.

"Confound it!" exclaimed the middy, wrathfully. "That is just our luck. Now we will have to wait for the ship chandler's launch or hire a special tug."

"Well, we will postpone doing the latter until we secure some of that Fuegan gold," replied Lovering, grimly. "It only costs thirty or forty dollars, and I am not wealthy enough just at present. Suppose we drop in at Forbes' and see when he intends sending out to the ship."

Suiting the action to the word, they called at the purveyor's, and learned that a boat would not be dispatched to the man-of-war before ten o'clock. It was now seven, and there remained three hours of time to utilize. As they had had nothing to eat since leaving Rosario the previous morning, a restaurant was hunted up, and the inner man attended to.

The disturbing influences of the revolution had not extended out here, and, with the exception of an occasional body of troops passing through from the country, nothing indicated the onward progress of the fatal attack on the government. The fleet had ceased firing some time during the night, and was now resting on its laurels. From the flagship floated a white flag, which probably meant a temporary armistice. The young officers learned afterward that representatives from the different foreign war

vessels present had expostulated in emphatic terms against such an unwarranted bombardment of a defenceless city.

After leaving the restaurant, Gordon and Lovering strolled along the water front to pass the time, and talked over the all-engrossing topic of the expedition. Happening to glance over toward the Platense repair docks, the latter saw a steam yacht moored there.

"I say, Jack," he exclaimed, pointing her out with his finger, "isn't that Mr. Goodrich's yacht? There; that one with the rakish funnel and masts."

"Why, yes, that is she," replied the middy, suddenly interested. "Suppose we go over and take a look at her."

Lovering willingly agreed; so, taking a rowboat at the dock, they were soon alongside.

The *Marie* was a well-constructed, compact craft of about three hundred tons burden. She carried two masts, rigged as a schooner, with a light monkey yard on the fore for signaling purposes. As seen from a short distance, she presented a very trim run, and looked capable of showing her heels to the majority of pleasure yachts of her size. The sides were painted black, but a broad gold band running from the carved figurehead—a woman's face—relieved the somber effect. Like the generality of American yachts, she carried a flush deck, with the usual number of companionways and ornamental skylights.

Just abaft the foremast was a very large and roomy pilot-house, which probably served as a lounge and smoking-room also. An awning stretched over the quarterdeck gave promise of a pleasant promenade, and, as the middy and Lovering ran alongside, they mentally

congratulated themselves on having the opportunity of sailing in her.

At first, after reaching the deck, no one appeared in sight, but presently a woolly head was thrust out of the after companionway, and a young negro lad, clothed in a neat yachting uniform, emerged.

He seemed to be about sixteen, and quite black, but as he approached nearer they saw that he possessed a startling incongruity—fiery red hair of the most pronounced hue. As Jack explained afterward, it looked like an angry flame bursting from a lump of coal. It was certainly a startling contrast, to say the least.

"Good-mawning, gentlemen," he greeted them, politely removing his cap. "Is you wanting to see any one?"

"Not at present," replied Gordon, hardly able to remove his eyes from the boy's head. "We are friends of Mr. Goodrich, and have come on board to look around at his invitation. Are you in charge?"

"No, sah; I'se de cabin-boy, but capting, he's gone ashore to see dis awful revolution, an' I'se about the only pusson aboard. Marster Goodrich's friends am allus welcome, an' if you will let me show you around I'll do it with pleasure, sah."

An increased respect was noticeable in his manner on learning they were friends of the owner, and, with his capacious mouth extended from ear to ear in a conciliatory grin, he led the way to the after cabin.

It was of generous size and handsomely furnished. A hard wood partition, with curtains extending across the forward end, separated the dining-room from the saloon

proper, and, opening on either side, were several small but very cozy staterooms. As usual, one occupying the entire width of the vessel aft was reserved for the owner. Swinging chandeliers, glass racks, a well secured picture or two, and a thick-woven Brussels carpet added to the comfortable interior.

"What is your name?" asked Jack, as their sable guide conducted them into the engine-room.

"Sam, sah; Sam Sorreltop. That's what dey all calls me, an' I 'spects that's my name. At leastwise, I done got no other."

"Well, it has the merit of being appropriate," laughed George, "and that is more than the most of us can say."

"You are right, there," the middy chimed in. "Look at that pilot who brought us out of New York. His name was Christian, and he swore so the chaplain had to rig preventer braces on his converts."

The machinery was evidently undergoing repairs, as the general untidiness of the engine-room and a number of tools lying about indicated the presence of workmen. They next visited the wheelhouse, and, after spending several minutes inspecting the appliances for steering by steam, gave Sam a pecuniary token and started ashore. It was nearly ten o'clock, but, as the market launch left a dock hard by, they were in ample time.

On arriving at the ship they were greeted with open arms by the junior officers, who declared they had considered them victims of Argentine bullets, and were, in fact, bitterly disappointed because such a splendid opportunity for getting revenge and action at the same time

had been lost. Paying little heed to their comrades' badinage, they changed uniforms and reported to the captain.

That grave and experienced officer listened to their explanations with the air of one whom thirty years of active service could not allow a single expression of emotion. However, he did use a nautical phrase much in vogue among old-school graduates of the profane sea, when Jack, wishing to strike while the iron was hot, boldly asked permission to apply to the department for six months' leave of absence.

It required all the persuasive powers of both, and a partial description of their plans, to induce him to yield, but when he once did give his consent he showed a latent kindness of heart by offering to cable personally to Washington. In regard to their being forced by the commandant to join his company at the railway station, the captain stated that it would be impossible to do much in the matter with such irresponsible parties, but he would report the affair to the minister.

Highly elated, they returned to the "steerage country" where junior officers are berthed, and prepared for another trip ashore. Just before leaving, word came off that a general armistice had been declared, which, to one versed in South American politics, would mean the actual triumph of one party or the other for several months at least.

Owing to the explanation given the captain, they obtained permission to stay on shore until word was received from the Secretary of the Navy, "on condition,"

grimly added the old officer, "that they would bring him enough gold to fill a hollow tooth."

It was late in the afternoon when they reached Mr. Goodrich's house, but he was at home, evidently expecting them, and the hearty greeting he extended was very gratifying to both. Marie also seemed pleased to renew their acquaintance, and when Jack gallantly inquired after her health, in tones worthy of the most weighty import, she rewarded him with a glance from her dark, sparkling eyes which set his heart going "pit-a-pat," as he explained it.

As the household was again organized and in running order, the old gentleman insisted they should make their home with him until the day of sailing, a proposition they were not slow in accepting, for several reasons. The evening was spent in agreeable conversation, and when they at last retired it was with the feeling that they had known Mr. Goodrich and his charming daughter for years, not hours.

CHAPTER VI.

A STARTLING RECOGNITION.

The Goodrich household was astir bright and early next morning. Now that the expedition was almost assured—the only thing standing in the way being a refusal to grant the furloughs, which, according to the young officers' knowledge of the service, was not probable—the old gentleman displayed an activity in arranging details surprising in one of his age.

Having made his money early in life, a fact which, as he expressed it, chained him body and soul to the desk during his best days, he had started to see the world in a unique way. The project was delayed until Marie, a motherless child, had graduated from college; then, buying a steam yacht, he made a tour of the principal cities of Europe, living in each three months. In the course of time they arrived at Buenos Ayres, where he had resided only three weeks prior to the opening of this story.

Absolutely independent, and devoted only to his daughter, he felt himself free to embark in any enterprise. The sturdy, honest spirit of Jack Gordon pleased him, and he was equally satisfied with the more matured nature of the young surgeon; so, being a man of generous impulse, albeit cautious when need be, he resolved to carry the projected search for the treasure through to the end if only for the benefit of his young friends.

It had been decided the previous evening to visit the *Marie* early in the day, and see whether the work required to fit her for sea could be hurried in any way. The Platense Company, where she was under repairs, was an English corporation, and it was possible a slight increase in the sum to be paid might act as a spur. Then a list of sea stores, together with arms and other items, had to be drawn up and submitted to purveyors.

On the local train *en route* to the Boca, Mr. Goodrich mentioned the fact that his crew was short four men, he not having cared to fill the vacancies until his stay was drawing to a close.

"I am very careful in my selection," he continued, "and have always made it a point to supervise that part myself. There is very little to do in the line of seamanship on board, as we seldom use the sails, and the duty of those forward only consists of keeping the vessel clean, excepting, of course, the quartermasters and firemen. With good wages and food, I can reasonably expect a good crew, and I generally get it."

"How much of a crew do you carry?" asked Jack, always interested in anything nautical.

"Fifteen, including the captain, a very worthy man, to whom I will introduce you to-day. He is an old-type merchant skipper named Breeze, and rather odd in his manners, but, like the chained house dog, more bark than bite. Ah! here is the station."

The train pulled up at a little wooden depot just across from where the *Marie* lay. Mr. Goodrich took out a handkerchief, and waved it at a man standing near the

pilot-house, who, on seeing the signal, called several more from the forecastle, and soon a light, trim gig was waiting to convey them across the narrow stretch of river. Jack noticed, with professional satisfaction, the regulation man-of-war stroke pulled by the men, and when the party reached the gangway ladder he was but little surprised to see several others standing at attention on deck, with hands touching their caps. This argued well for discipline.

Just as they stepped over the side a man dressed in a semi-naval uniform came out of a room abaft the pilot-house, and advanced to meet them. That it was the captain of the yacht, they knew at a glance. It did not need Mr. Goodrich's hasty introduction, because one view of the sturdy, well knit frame rolling along the deck, and the bronzed, weather-beaten face, with a tuft of shaggy gray whiskers fringing the lower edge like the feathering rim of a storm cloud, proclaimed him the skipper at once.

As he shook hands, his gnarled and horny fingers grasped theirs with a clutch practiced on many a weather leech, and, in a voice borrowed from some forty years of tempests, he roared:

"Deadlights! but I am glad to see ye! The commodore's friends, eh? and naval officers from the *Wampum*. Well, that's good. Do ye know, I seen that self-same old cruiser in Singapore over twenty-five years ago. She was a smart ship then, but, bless ye! she's only fit to carry coal these days. The idea of putting likely young fellows on board that Noah's ark. Why it's a ripping shame. But times is changing now, an' in the new

navy—— Is Shag on board, did ye say, commodore? Yes; down in your room. Going down, eh? Well, I'll follow ye just as soon as I write the log." He lurched away, leaving Jack to wonder whether he had not lived in Dickens' times as Captain Bunsby.

The party adjourned to the cabin, where Mr. Goodrich, opening the door leading into his private room, released a big Newfoundland dog, which, hurling his huge bulk against the old gentleman, nearly knocked him off his feet.

"Down, Shag! Down, boy! Where is Sam?"

At the question, the intelligent animal rushed from one room to another, and then darted into the pantry, from where he presently triumphantly emerged, dragging the red-headed negro boy by the trousers leg. That he had been in mischief was indicated by his appearance of confusion, but it was further groven by a sticky mass of jam around his mouth and fingers.

"What is this?" demanded Mr. Goodrich, but in a voice filled with laughter. "Making free with the stores, eh? Well, we will have to teach you a lesson. Take him on deck, Shag, and keep him prisoner until I send up word."

Sam disappeared, a willing captive, and from his actions seemed on the best of terms with his canine jailer. The sound of muffled barking and skurrying feet overhead proclaimed an apparent attempt at jail delivery before many minutes had passed.

"That is a good boy, but he is mischievous," explained the old gentleman. "Did you ever see a more funny-

looking head? When I go into a foreign port I am almost afraid to let him ashore because of the crowds that follow him on the streets. Now, boys, if you will come with me we will see what can be done about the repairs."

Leaving the yacht, they walked over a gangplank leading to the dock, and were soon in the main office of the Platense Company. What passed between Mr. Goodrich and the superintendent was not known by the young officers, but when they returned on board an increased din was noticeable in the engine-room, and several new men reported for duty.

"He now says she can be ready for sea in two weeks," said the owner, with a chuckle. "Gold is a powerful metal, eh, my treasure-seekers?"

"Well, I hope we shall find enough of the power to move us in affluence," replied Lovering, cheerfully. "But that reminds me of the queer disappearance of Garcia's body. It seems to me they wouldn't remove the dead until daylight, especially on a housetop."

"Wherever his body went, the poor beggar cannot be alive," reasoned Jack, "or else he would come for that precious paper. Fancy the man killing three others for it, and then letting it go; not much."

"His being alive is out of the question, and I don't think we need worry about him," said Mr. Goodrich, conclusively. "We will now get to work figuring on stores and other supplies."

Several hours were spent in drawing up a list, which included, among other things, a dozen repeating rifles and revolvers.

A large quantity of ammunition was also ordered, together with the necessary camp equipage for use on the island. After taking lunch on board, a start was made for the city, with the intention of spending the afternoon at the house.

It is not necessary to go into details concerning the following ten days, as nothing of interest occurred except the department's approval of the application for furloughs. These were sent ashore some days later, and on their receipt Gordon and Lovering felt themselves indeed embarked on a momentous journey.

It was finally resolved on the part of Mr. Goodrich to take his daughter with them. At first he proposed to leave her at an acquaintance's house in Buenos Ayres, but her pleading, and the fact that she had not been separated from him for a day since leaving the United States, altered his determination. Jack did not care to enter his voice in approval, but it might have been noticed that his spiritual barometer rose considerably when told of the result by Marie.

On the tenth day after the revolution, the entire party moved on board the yacht preparatory to setting out on the voyage. There was an abundance of room, and as the craft had been especially fitted up, regardless of expense, for the owner's comfort, it proved very much of a home. To the young officers, accustomed as they had been for several years to the questionable conveniences of a man-of-war steerage, they felt that it was luxury indeed.

As Jack put it, touching an electric button for imme-

diate attention was vastly different from straining one's voice for a skulking servant.

Mr. Goodrich had been unable to complete his crew as yet. There had been various applicants, but none satisfactory. He did not care to break his rule of selecting those men who could furnish good references, both written and facial, and he prided himself on being able to judge a man's character by his countenance.

The day after their arrival on board, Jack and the "commodore," as the captain called him, to his infinite amusement, were down in the latter's room making several copies of the map obtained from Garcia. George Lovering was in his own stateroom arranging a series of shelves as a medical dispensary.

Suddenly Captain Breeze's huge bulk filled the companion-hatch, and, like a subdued whirlwind, came his voice, rattling the glasses on the table-rack.

"Ahoy! the commodore!"

Mr. Goodrich laughed, and, nudging Jack, made a trumpet of his hands, and replied:

"Ahoy! the captain; what is in sight?"

"Ye air wanted on deck. Three or four crafts hove alongside wanting to ship. They air trim built, and it might pay ye to overhaul them."

Telling him to detain them a moment, the old gentleman finished his work, and, bidding Jack follow him, went up to the pilot-house. There they found four sailors leaning against the rail, who, on their approach, doffed hats, and respectfully listened, while one of their number stated their application. They were likely-look-

ing lads, with the exception of the spokesman. He seemed to be a Spaniard, or possibly an Italian, and had evidently just recovered from a severe illness. His dark, swarthy face was drawn and wan, and as he talked, in fairly good English, he was occasionally interrupted by a convulsive cough.

His words were in substance a desire on the part of the three to ship on board the *Marie* as seamen or firemen. As for himself, the senor could see that he had been ill, but he was recovering rapidly, and the doctors had told him that if he could go on a voyage where the work was light he would soon be a well man. All this he poured forth in a voluble stream, clasping his hands in supplication, and invoking the saints to influence the heart of the good gentleman.

"What do you say, Jack?" asked Mr. Goodrich, sympathetically. "I like the appearance of the three lads; they are strong and will make good firemen. This poor fellow can help around, and I do not like to refuse such an appeal as that."

The middy saw that Mr. Goodrich had made up his mind, and, although to him the Spaniard's face was not altogether prepossessing, he simply murmured his acquiescence.

As they were turning away, after informing the captain that he could ship the four men, they heard an exclamation, and saw George advancing rapidly toward the group. His face was pale, and, pointing toward the Spaniard, he cried:

"Jack! that man's face! Quick! Who is he?"

CHAPTER VII.

AN ACCIDENT ON THE RIVER.

Looking at the young surgeon in wonder, Gordon answered slowly:

"Why, George, what is the matter? These men have come on board to ship. I don't know their names yet."

Mr. Goodrich had remained staring from one to the other, apparently unable to speak from astonishment. The man himself seemed to be as much surprised as the rest, and, turning to one of his companions, said something in an undertone.

Then Lovering, eyeing him closely, gave a short laugh, and replied in what he evidently tried to make a careless tone:

"I suppose I am mistaken, but this man's face reminds me of some one I saw the other night under peculiar circumstances. Come to think of it, the thing is impossible."

"The senor probably wishes to know my name," spoke up the Spaniard, suavely. "It is Juan Lopez. I have never met the senor, to my knowledge."

"No—no! That is all right," replied George. "It is only a fancied resemblance." Then, turning on his heel, he walked aft, followed by Jack and Mr. Goodrich.

Captain Breeze had remained a silent spectator of the

whole occurrence until now. As the others moved away they could hear him growl in what he thought was a whisper, but in reality it sounded like the distant muttering of a gale. Occasional words such as "lubbers" and "half-baked" sailors caused them to look back, and they saw him in the act of shoving the new men down the forecastle hatch with no gentle touch.

On reaching the companionway leading below, Jack stopped, and, placing his hand on the young surgeon's shoulder, said firmly:

"George, who did you think that fellow was? Now tell me. I believe you really did recognize some one."

"No, Jack, honestly, I was mistaken. I thought it was —pshaw! the thing is absurd. Don't let us talk any more about it."

Turning to Mr. Goodrich, he continued, with a laugh:

"It's funny how people will sometimes be deceived by a fancied resemblance, isn't it?"

"If you know anything against this man let me know at once," replied the old man, gravely. "I am only taking him out of sympathy for his unfortunate position, but even that would not influence me if I thought he was unworthy of it."

Lovering insisted that he had made a mistake, so the subject was dropped, and soon forgotten. The new men set to work at once, two of them in the fireroom and the other two, one of whom was Lopez, on deck. The latter seemed a very willing hand, and, despite his illness, able to attend to any duties given him.

Even Captain Breeze was forced to acknowledge in

time that his presence on board did not necessarily turn the ship into a hospital as he had prophesied.

Occasionally George would meet him on deck, and ask if he needed any medicine, but Juan always replied with a cheerful smile that all he needed was plenty of good salt air.

At last the momentous day arrived when the "Terra del Fuegan Treasure Company, Limited," was to make its first cast for fortune. The repairs to the engines had been completed, stores received on board, and all that remained necessary to commence the voyage was the hauling in of dock ropes and a severance from Argentine territory.

To commemorate the start, Mr. Goodrich ordered a collation served in the saloon, which was noticeably conspicuous for the absence of wine. In the short speech he made at the conclusion, he said that the keystone of his success was non-indulgence in any spirituous beverage, and that a roof of his would never cover a drop, except for medicinal purposes.

At exactly eight bells (noon) the party, with the exception of Marie, who remained aft under the awning, took their station on the bridge, and at a signal from the captain the ropes were cast lose. The Boca is a very narrow stream, and, crowded as it is with moving craft of every description, navigation is extremely difficult and slow.

A short distance from the mouth is an entrance into the new docks, and it was just here that an accident happened which nearly led to fatal results. Captain Breeze

had the yacht under one bell, and kept the whistle going constantly. The stalwart young sailors were at the wheel, and it required watchful care and prompt obedience to answer all commands from the pilot.

All went well until the *Marie* arrived at the entrance mentioned above. Just as she was passing, a huge tramp steamer came swinging in, and, either from an unmanageable rudder or carelessness on the part of some one, crowded the bow of the smaller vessel against the dock. Then ensued a scene of great confusion. The officers on board the tramp rushed up and down, issuing orders in a queer mixture of German and English, and in their excitement forgot to stop the engines.

The result was inevitable. Pushed by the gigantic force of ten hundred horse power, the yacht heeled over and over until she listed at an angle of fifty degrees.

It was a perilous moment. A little further and the iron fabric would be crushed like an egg shell, or else capsized to sink beneath the waters of the river. When the first shock came it found Captain Breeze engaged in consigning the eyes of the German skipper to a much warmer region, but when actual danger threatened he ceased shouting and set every bell in the engine-room jingling at a terrifice rate. Then, leaping from the bridge with an incredible activity, lowered several cork fenders over the side next the dock.

In the meantime, Jack had not been idle. At the first sign of peril he thought of Marie, and, running aft, had almost reached her side, when a sudden lurch of the hull caused the frightened girl to slip against the rail netting.

Thinking all was lost, she uttered one long cry for help, and, before he could prevent it, leaped over the stern into the swiftly rushing waters. Not stopping to divest himself of outer clothing, the middy gained the side with one bound, and, spurning the rail with his foot, jumped to the rescue.

Mr. Goodrich, a helpless spectator on the bridge, saw with horror his daughter's rash act, and, but for the young surgeon, would have gone after his child. Hurriedly assuring him that Jack would save her, Lovering rushed to the stern as fast as the sloping deck would permit, and, unloosening a circular life-preserver, threw it as far as his strength would permit. To his joy he saw the middy, with one arm around Marie, struggle toward it, and, after a few frantic efforts, succeed in grasping the dependent cords. By that time a dozen boats had put off from shore, and one soon had them in safety.

All this happened in far less time than it takes to describe it. In fact, thirty seconds had not elapsed between the time the collision had occurred and the mishap to Marie. But in that period Captain Breeze had, with rare presence of mind, performed an act which ultimately saved the ship. Seeing that the German officers were too badly frightened to back their vessel, he grasped a rope dangling over the tramp's side, and, with the agility of a cat, clambered on deck. Once there it did not take long to find the indicator leading into the engine-room. Giving the lever a wrench which almost pulled it from the socket, he telegraphed "stop" and "astern, full speed," and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the larger ship

move slowly away. With a sudden lurch, the *Marie* righted herself, and after a few rolls remained on an even keel.

Calling a shore boat, he first deliberately snapped his fingers in the skipper's face, and, with a disdainful "Bah!" which could have been heard a mile inland, lowered himself out of sight, leaving them staring with open-mouthed wonder. Once on board the yacht it did not take him long to ascertain that very little if any damage had been done, thanks to his own foresight in using the fenders. Jack and Marie were by that time in the cabin donning dry clothes. They appeared none the worse for their involuntary bath, and the middy was soon on deck again, receiving the heartfelt thanks of Mr. Goodrich.

"It is only another item in the list of services you have rendered me," he said, wringing Gordon's hand, "and, my boy, I shall surely find occasion to repay you as you deserve." But ungrateful Jack thought more of a few broken words of gratitude he had just heard from Marie than all else.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAIF.

At first Mr. Goodrich intended to remain in Buenos Ayres and secure damages from the German steamer, as the mishap was palpably the German skipper's fault, but, on ascertaining that a few coats of paint would cover everything, he decided to continue the voyage. No further mishap detained them, and by nightfall they were well clear of the river. At his own request Jack had been installed as first officer, or mate, taking the place of the regular man, who had elected to remain behind.

He was fully competent to attend to the various duties of the position, and, so far as navigation went, could have probably given the captain instructions in that science. The latter and he stood watch at night, but it was expected that an old sailor named Ben Brett would be given temporary charge of the deck during calm weather.

The crew had been divided into two watches, starboard and port, containing three men each, Jack taking the latter. Juan Lopez, the Spaniard; an ordinary seaman called Dawson and a New Jersey lad sailing under the title of "Bob," formed his crew. Captain Breeze had Ben and two others.

In the engineer's department were six all told, including the chief, Mr. Watts, and one assistant. Two of the

men who shipped with Lopez acted as firemen, and proved very trustworthy. These details are necessary to a proper understanding of certain incidents which befell the good yacht *Marie* on her voyage toward the south.

At the time of sailing the weather had promised fair, and the mercurial barometer in the captain's cabin registered above thirty, but to that cautious old salt's evident perturbation, it commenced to drop steadily on the second day out. This, as he very well knew, portended a pampero, that most peculiar of gales, only to be met with on the South American coast.

The sky remained clear, but away off toward the distant horizon a tremulous line of sullen clouds gradually crept higher and higher, until at last it formed a black, frowning belt, from which came a howling squall, sweeping the stretch of sea with resistless force.

The sudden change from an almost placid ocean to a heaving surface of storm tossed waves was remarkable. From his station on the bridge the middy looked upon a scene never before encountered in his experience. At first a low moaning of the wind through the taut cordage overhead sounded. It was like the faint growling of a wild beast ready to spring; then, gradually increasing until the bellowing of the gale deafened all other noises, a mighty force struck the yacht, sending her almost on her beam ends. Coming from the direction of the land could be seen a dark line of water, curling over into colorless crests.

Gathering strength as it gained deeper soundings, it swept on and on, the advance guard of a tumultuous sea,

until, before the watchers could hardly realize the fact, they were in the midst of it, a tossing cork on the boundless waste. Everything had been battened down hours ago, and life-lines stretched wherever convenient. The yacht was stanch and well constructed, and, although she pitched and rolled so the crew could barely keep their feet, yet no immediate danger was anticipated.

Swathed in oil-skins and a huge southwester, Jack clung to the bridge's rail, and faced the tempest in calm satisfaction. He loved his calling, and seemed never happier than when old ocean showed his wildest moods. The captain stood at his side, an incarnation of Father Neptune, with beard glistening from the salty spray, and his sun-tanned visage as imperturbable as the Sphinx.

All night long the storm raged with unabated fury, and, when a few pale streaks of light pierced the somber bank of clouds to leeward, it shone stern and uncompromising upon the desolate scene. All night long both Jack and the captain remained at their post, watchful and vigilant. A small staysail had been set forward to steady the yacht as much as possible, and the course was abandoned for the time being, she simply running before the wind with a slight southerly tack.

As soon as it became light enough to see any distance ahead, Jack took the binocle and searched long and earnestly for possible neighbors. At first he could discern nothing save an interminable monotony of waters, but, happening to glance at a spot on the horizon made lighter by a rift in the clouds, he discovered a faint, gleaming point which could only be the glint of a sail.

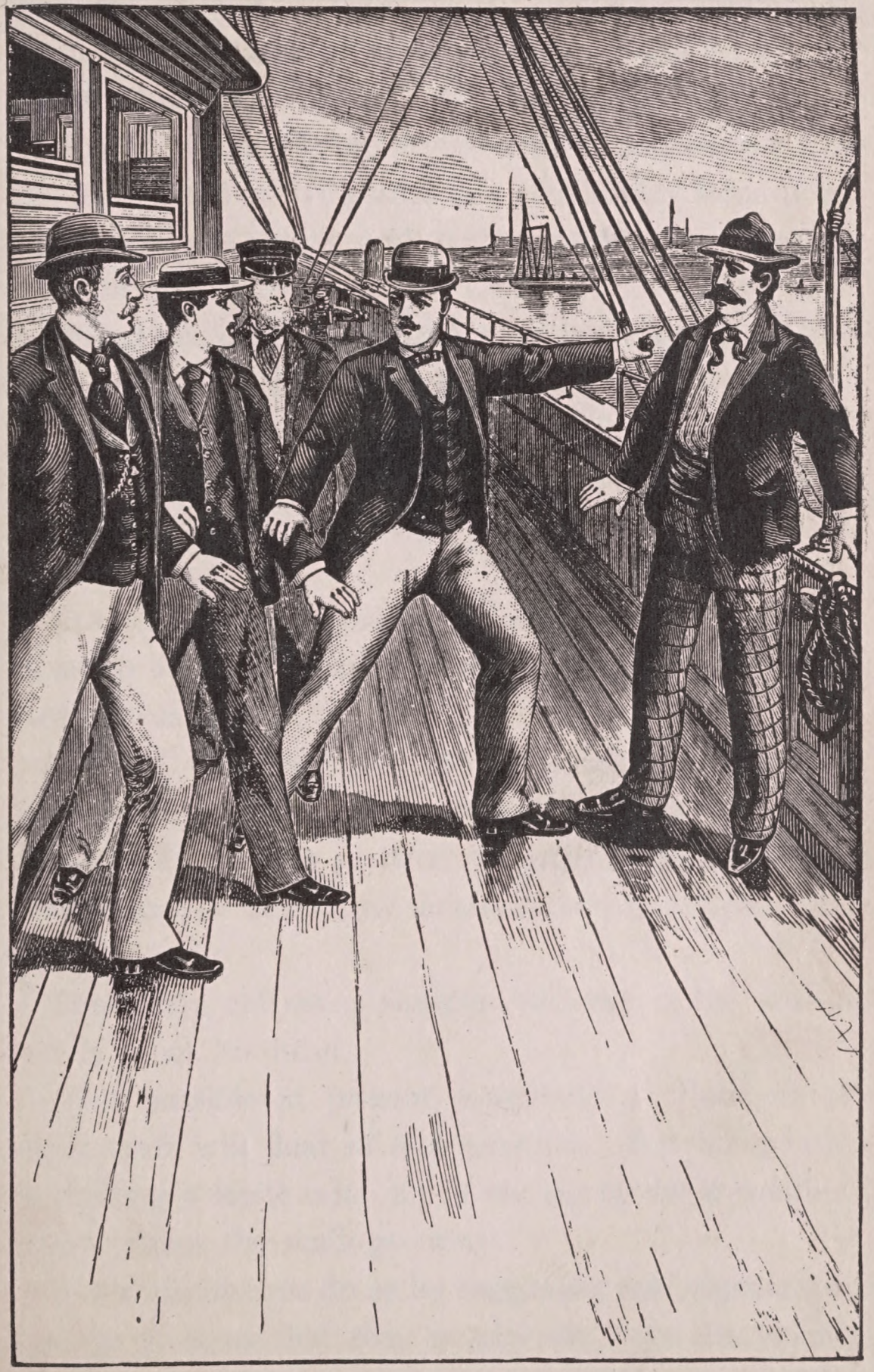
Handing the glass to Captain Breeze, Gordon indicated the place with his finger, and awaited the decision of that ancient mariner. It was not long coming. Giving the railing in front of him a bang with his brawny fist, he shouted to the helmsman to keep her off a couple of points, and then communicated to Jack his intention, given in a voice which rumbled above the tempests best efforts, of bearing down on her, "for, ye know, lad, she might be a-wanting something, an' it's the commodore's orders never to neglect an opportunity to give aid."

They watched the speck gradually grow larger and more plain, until at last it stood revealed, a bark apparently drifting at the mercy of the waves. From afar off the captain saw something wrong in the swing of her yards, and, gluing his eyes to the glasses, explained to Jack that she was either abandoned or should be.

"She's lumber laden an' water-logged as sure as guns. Her mainmast is gone, an' there's not much life in her, as ye can tell by that there roll," he added, critically surveying the tossing hulk through the binocle. "It's not this gale which wrecked her, that's sartin, for she's been that way for days."

"I wonder if there is any one on board?" mused the middy, half to himself.

"Don't see any sign yet. I hope not, for this sea is a sight too rough for our boats. Lor' love ye! even that air quarter-boat wouldn't live two minutes. That's the trouble with these pamperos, as the dagos call them. They kick up such a pother in a short time, but then it don't take long to blow over. I expect this one will be



"Who is he?" See page 52.

gone before long; it feels like it. Just take the deck till I run down an' look at the barometer. Keep her a-heading for the bark. I'll be back before we get close."

He had hardly left the bridge before a sudden cry from Gordon caused him to glance up. The middy stood pointing toward the wreck, and, with the other hand, beckoning him to return.

"What on 'arth's the matter now?" exclaimed the captain, running up the ladder again.

"There is some one on board of her," replied Jack, excitedly. "Take the glass and look just abaft the galley. There! that spot is moving sure; I can see it with my naked eye now."

Just then Mr. Goodrich, accompanied by Lovering, came on deck, and was soon at their side. Gordon hurriedly explained.

"What!" exclaimed the old gentleman, with emotion. "A human being on that wreck, and in peril? Something must be done at once. Captain Breeze, can you send a boat or devise any means to rescue the poor creature?"

The hardy old sailor squinted one eye at the sea and slowly shook his head.

"Not possible at present, commodore. None of our small craft will float in that smother. But the weather is clearing a leetle mite, an' if we lay by for a couple of hours, p'raps the sea'll go down."

It was decided to do as he suggested, and signals were run up to show that they would not leave the vicinity. The yacht was close enough now to enable them to plainly

distinguish the vessel's deck. It presented a picture of destruction almost impossible to realize, strewn with wreckage of every description; snarls of cordage, fragments of spars and masts, and an indescribable confusion of broken hen-coops, boats, lumber and what not, all showing the power of the storm it must have encountered.

But that which riveted their attention and made their hearts grow faint as they noticed the sullen, sluggish roll of the derelict, was a human figure now standing aft on the poop, waving its arms in piteous supplication. It seemed to be that of a young lad, probably not over fifteen, truly a youthful age to be found in such a position.

As they watched the movements of the hulk, they noticed with anxiety that its decks were almost awash with the sea. Suddenly a larger wave than usual struck the stern with terrific force, sending tons of water over the cabin house. At first they thought it had carried the lad away, but a moment later he was seen climbing the mizzen rigging. An involuntary cheer burst from their lips, only to be followed by a cry of horror as they saw the hull disappear before their eyes, swallowed up by the remorseless ocean.

"He is gone!" groaned Mr. Goodrich, his blanched face quivering with emotion.

But suddenly Lovering, who had grabbed the glass from its case on the rail, excitedly called out that he could see something resembling a head in the midst of a mass of wreckage near where the vessel had disappeared. Instantly all were looking in that direction.

"There it is!" cried Jack, pointing with his hand, then, turning to the old gentleman, he continued resolutely: "Mr. Goodrich, if you will give me a boat, I'll try to save that lad."

Carried away by the excitement of the moment, the commodore gave his consent, and, not waiting for instructions, the middy rushed aft, followed by four men who had instantly responded to his call for volunteers.

The lashing of the quarter-boat was cut away, and, watching for a favorable opportunity, they safely lowered her into the water. Two minutes later the tossing craft was speeding on its errand of mercy.

CHAPTER IX.

A SURPRISE.

The weather showed signs of abating. Toward the east a blue patch of sky became visible, fringed with fleecy gray clouds. The wind still blew with undiminished fury, but an occasional lull, momentary in duration, indicated a change for the better.

Leaving those on board the yacht to watch the scene with anxious hearts, we will accompany Jack on his perilous journey. After the boat had shoved away from under the lee of the counter it was almost smothered in a mass of spume, but the middy's skillful hand kept her out of the trough of the sea, and headed as near as possible toward the form he could barely discern some hundreds of yards distant.

There were four stalwart men handling the oars, and it needed all their strength to prevent the frail craft from capsizing. Several times a green-crested wave broke over them, filling the bottom of the boat, requiring the service of one in bailing it out. But at last, after a hard, long pull, and a constant battle with the angry waters, they reached the fragment of spar to which the young lad was still clinging. He seemed almost exhausted, and when Jack called out to him to let go as they swept past, the middy saw they were just in time.

Holding the steering oar with one hand, Gordon managed to grasp his arm with the other, and, assisted by one of the men, had the almost inanimate body over the gunwale in safety. A wavering cheer came from the yacht, heard even above the roaring of the gale, and the sound put new strength into them.

It required cautious work to head the other way, but, watching his chance, Jack managed to accomplish the manœuvre with no greater damage than a thorough wetting. The greatest danger was still to come. Riding the waves in the open was mere child's play compared to hooking onto the boat tackles with such a sea running. One contact with the yacht's iron hull would smash the boat into kindling-wood.

As they approached nearer Gordon was glad to see that preparations had been made to lower a boatswain's chair at the spanker-boom end. He knew this was meant for the now unconscious lad. As they rounded the stern the men backed water just under the dangling rope. After several ineffectual attempts, their waif was securely fastened and hoisted on board in a jiffy. Now came the tug-of-war.

Captain Breeze, thorough seaman that he was, had kept the yacht heading so as to form a bit of tranquil sea on that side containing the boat davits.

Steering as close as he dared, the middy suddenly ran her in, and she was hooked on before the vessel rose to the next wave. Willing hands were ready to pull away on the falls, the word was given, and with a "Yeo heave ho!" the quarter-boat quit the water in safety.

But, just as the double blocks of the hoisting tackle touched each other, a ring in the bow gave way, and with a sudden crash she dropped back into the raging seas. It happened so quickly that only two of the crew were able to save themselves. The rest went with her.

Jack, from his place in the stern, had adjusted the falls, and at the very moment the catastrophe occurred, he was busily engaged clearing them so they would run free. When he felt the shock he clung to the tackles, and was hauled inboard by those on deck. The man in the bow was rescued in a similar manner.

As for the other three sailors, at first they were nowhere to be seen, and it was feared that, stunned by the fall, they had gone down without a struggle. But presently Lovering's sharp eyes espied them floating in the midst of the boat's wreckage. Captain Breeze had hove the steamer to before the middy's return, so they were now directly astern, but being rapidly carried away by the restless impulse of the sea.

It was a moment of extreme peril for them. Some little time would be required to launch the other boat, and it was doubtful whether they could keep up that long. Several life-preservers had been thrown overboard, which, together with the lumber from the bark, and other *débris,* would afford a temporary support if they could only reach them.

For a brief space even the veteran skipper was horror-stricken at the accident. It occurred so suddenly that all they could do for the moment was to stare helplessly at the struggling figures in the water. Then several men

rushed toward the other falls, and without waiting for orders, commenced casting off the gripes. Jack and the young surgeon were foremost, and worked like beavers. Even Mr. Goodrich tried to assist, but his limited knowledge handicapped his efforts, and, leaving that to the others, he turned his attention to the waif, who was still lying on the deck where he had been placed.

After some little delay, caused by the long unused ropes jamming in the blocks, they at last had the boat swinging free from the side, and she was lowered down with a crew under charge of Ben Brett. The middy had insisted on making it his trip also, but he was peremptorily ordered to remain on board by the captain, who added grimly:

"One bite of the cherry is enough, my lad. You young fellers want all the glory these here days, an' there's old Brett who was a steerin' a boat while you rocked in a three-foot cradle as would like a chance hisself."

Old Ben took his chance, and acquitted himself creditably. Under his skillful guidance the three men, who had managed to keep themselves above water by clinging to pieces of the wreck, were rescued, and the entire party returned to the yacht without further mishap. This time the rings held to their duty, and at last all were safe on board, imbibing copious draughts of hot coffee especially brewed for them at the galley fire.

Aft in the cabin Lovering was preparing to resuscitate the innocent cause of all the trouble. The sufferer had been placed on a settee in the main saloon, where, after a few minutes' work, the young surgeon had the satisfac-

tion of seeing him open his eyes. He glanced wildly about from face to face, then, trying to spring erect, muttered something which Jack, standing close by, understood to be a Spanish sentence.

"Just lie quiet for a while," replied the middy in the same tongue. "You are on board an American yacht, and all you need now is a little rest."

Obeying Gordon's advice, he fell back on the sofa, but his eyes still roved about the cabin in evident search of something. Suddenly he noticed Marie a little to the rear of the others, and, jumping up again, he tottered over to where she stood. Then, to the great surprise of all, he bent over and whispered in her ear.

Those watching saw an expression of astonishment come over Marie's face, immediately followed by a look of intense sympathy; then the girl, throwing one arm around the waif's waist, beckoned to her father. Mystified beyond measure, the old gentleman walked over to them, but, on being spoken to by his daughter, turned to the others, and, removing his hat, said, gallantly:

"Gentlemen, you have had the honor of rescuing a member of the opposite sex!"

To say they were astounded would be using an expression totally inadequate to the occasion. The middy simply whistled a prolonged "phew—w!" then recollecting himself, turned to Lovering with a blank look, ludicrous in the extreme. The little by-play did not last long, however. Both young officers advanced and courteously bowed, while Gordon, extending his hand, exclaimed:

"The happiness of being able to assist a fellow-creature

has taken an added charm which I cannot express in words."

This very fine sentence was unfortunately spoiled by a loud guffaw from the direction of the pantry. Turning, they saw Sam's shiny black face distended by a grin of huge proportions. The ridiculous sight served to put them on friendly terms at once, and, after a few further words, Marie led her new companion to her stateroom.

"Well, this is rather an unexpected *dénouement* to your little adventure, eh, Jack?" smiled Lovering.

"Yes; I wouldn't have been more surprised if we had run across a mermaid on the bark," replied the middy. "But, seriously, this is a peculiar state of affairs. I wonder how she came to be alone, and in that rig, too. Some mystery about it."

"The young lady will no doubt tell her story just as soon as she gets into proper clothing," said Mr. Goodrich. "It is fortunate Marie has plenty, isn't it? They seem to be about the same size, and of probably equal age. It is extremely lucky we chanced to be near. I shudder to think of the narrow escape she has had."

"Narrow, indeed," coincided George, gravely. "She must have passed through a terrible experience, even before we sighted the wreck. By the way, the vessel was probably Spanish. Didn't she speak to you in that language, Jack?"

"Yes," laconically replied Gordon; then, walking toward the stairs leading above, he added: "I am going on deck to see how the weather is. If she comes out don't forget to call me; I want to hear her story."

During the preceding half-hour the storm had subsided considerably. There was still a high sea running, but that would naturally continue for some time. When the middy reached the deck he looked aloft, after the manner of sailors, and found an almost cloudless sky overhead. A few fleecy remnants could be seen to leeward, but there was a "touch" to the wind which betokened the coming of fairer weather.

Going forward to the bridge, he found Captain Breeze pacing slowly up and down, looking little like a man who had not slept for twenty hours. When Jack told him the news he fairly gasped for breath, and then poured forth a string of nautical ejaculations wondrous to hear. Calling up old Brett, he bade him take charge while he went below to see "tha' new female."

In passing down the after hatch, they suddenly heard a loud commotion below, and, on hurrying to the saloon deck, saw a tableau startling in the extreme.

CHAPTER X.

MUTINY.

Standing near the center-table was Juan Lopez, the Spaniard, with an expression of fear paling his swarthy face. He had shrunk behind a narrow gilded stancheon, and was looking with distended eyes toward an open stateroom door on the starboard side.

As Jack and the captain reached the bottom of the stairs, they were just in time to see the young girl, now clad in garments befitting her sex, step toward Lopez and utter an exclamation in Spanish. She was trembling violently, and the horror imprinted on her countenance was distinguishable even from where they stood.

Behind her were Marie and Mr. Goodrich, both evidently very much astonished at the scene, and, coming out of his room, was the young surgeon, who, as he saw Gordon, walked quickly over to him and muttered:

"Jack, keep your eyes on that fellow; something is up!"

He had barely uttered the warning, when Lopez made a sudden spring toward them and darted up the stairs. The middy tried to catch his arm as he passed, but was not quick enough, and they soon heard the fellow's feet pattering on the deck overhead.

Not understanding the trouble, none attempted to pursue him, but turned their attention to the girl instead.

She had swooned, and was now lying in Marie's arms. At a word from her father the latter placed her on the sofa, where she was speedily revived by the judicious use of cold water. As soon as she seemed sufficiently recovered, the old gentleman asked her to explain.

"Ah, senores!" she commenced, looking in a terrified manner toward the steps. "Do not let that man go free. He is a murderer, and killed two men on my father's vessel in Montevideo!"

"A murderer!" echoed Mr. Goodrich, quickly. "Captain Breeze, have him seen to at once. See that he is placed where he can do no harm. A murderer, eh? and at large on my yacht. Well, this is a pretty pass. Jack, go with the captain, and, if necessary, call all hands to secure the villain. Have him locked up in the lamp-room until we can make other arrangements."

The middy bounded up the companion stairs, two steps at a time, but, waiting at the top for Captain Breeze, walked rapidly forward with him. On reaching the pilot-house, they saw a group of sailors standing just under the bridge. Old Brett was leaning over the rail pointing toward the forecastle hatch, evidently issuing some order.

"What on 'arth is the matter with that crazy dago you shipped in the Boca, captain?" he asked, making a speaking trumpet of his hands. "He shot past here a minute ago, followed by them three men that came on board with him. He is in the forecastle thar now."

"Rout 'em out an' call all hands to muster!" roared the now exasperated skipper. "That skulkin' shark has sent two mates to Davy Jones. Murdered them in cold blood.

We don't want any such ballast aboard this hooker. Ben, you keep on the bridge while I clear the fo'cas'le."

Followed by Gordon and the rest of the crew, Captain Breeze strode toward the forward hatch, picking up a belaying pin on the way. Beating with the instrument on the wooden canopy, he sang out in stentorious tones:

"Roust out of there, you men! All hands on deck! Tumble up lively or I'll help ye a little!"

Jack, who was standing at the top of the hatch, saw a head thrust out at the foot of the ladder. Then a hand appeared in view, holding a revolver pointing directly at him.

"We want to see Mr. Goodrich, the owner of this yacht," demanded the Spaniard, for it was he.

"Ye'll see nobody. Come out o' that, I tell ye! What d'ye mean, ye silly loons? If the fo'cas'le isn't empty in two minutes it's mutiny, an' I'll hang the hull lot. Don't give me any more of your slack, but obey orders." Turning to one of the men, he whispered: "Here, you Sam, look at the head of my bunk and fetch a couple of pistols you'll find there. Hurry up, now!. I'll show them villains what's what."

The middy had stepped back out of range, and was considering with the captain the advisability of calling Mr. Goodrich, when, glancing aft, they saw him coming, accompanied by the young surgeon.

"Where is that man?" asked the old gentleman, anxiously.

"Down below thar," gruffly replied Breeze. "He's armed an' has the three lubbers that shipped at the same

time a-backing him. I am afraid there's going to be trouble. He's a hard case, from all appearances, and wants a fight. Well, I'll give him a dose he'll remember, if they air not up in two minutes."

"He asked for you, Mr. Goodrich," added Jack. "I think you had better parley with them. Here, stand a little to one side; then, in case they fire, you will be safe."

The old gentleman gave him a startled glance. He began to realize that the affair was really serious, and it flashed over him that four desperate men, armed with revolvers, could cause a tragedy with very little effort. He was adverse to using force if there was any other way out of it, but a murderous scoundrel like Lopez must be secured at all hazards.

"Below there," he called out; "I am Mr. Goodrich. What do you wish?"

There was silence for a moment, then a confused sound of voices came to their ears. They could hear the Spaniard arguing with the others in impatient tones, but no answer was vouchsafed to his question.

"Fo'cas'le thar!" exclaimed the captain, loudly. "Air ye all deef? The commodore has hailed ye."

"Yes, we hear him," replied Lopez, insolently. "What we want is his word that he will not lock us up, and will land the four of us on the nearest shore. If he will do that we will promise to remain here until the vessel anchors. If not, there will be a fight. I will set the yacht on fire the moment you try to capture us, or if you head back to Montevideo or Buenos Ayres. We will give you two minutes to answer."

This was turning the tables with a vengeance. It hardly sounded like the cringing, obsequious Juan who had labored hard to please every one, and who had been especially detailed by the owner to assist in the cabin. His true character stood revealed.

Mr. Goodrich looked perplexed and worried. He fully believed Lopez meant what he said, and the very idea of a sanguinary conflict on his yacht was intolerable. But, although a peaceful man by nature, the old leaven of the New England stock—that spirit which ignited the fire which blazed into a glorious war of independence—would not permit him to calmly submit to the outrageous demands of a scoundrel like the Spaniard. He called a council of war.

"This is a grave matter, men," he began, addressing the crew as well, "and I am uncertain what to do. If there is a solution of the trouble without bloodshed, we must adopt it, but those dastardly villains must be secured, no matter what happens. What do you say, captain?"

"Say! Marline-spikes and ring-bolts! I'll go down an' haul 'em out by the neck. What! a parcel of landlubbers like that hold any ship I'm captain of? Bah!" Grasping the pistols brought him by the sailors, he started for the hatch, swearing strange oaths in a voice choked with wrath. But Lovering quietly checked him, and pointed out the advisability of exercising caution.

"They will only shoot you on sight, and that will be nothing gained. There is a better way than that." Then, turning to Gordon, the young surgeon added: "Slip down to my room, Jack, and bring up a leather case from

the shelf next the door. It is marked: 'Amyl. Poison.' Handle it carefully, as it is very dangerous."

While the middy was gone, Mr. Goodrich stated that the young girl rescued from the bark had explained how she happened to recognize Lopez.

"It seems he was a sailor on her father's vessel about a year ago, and one night, while riding at anchor in Montevideo, it was necessary to call all hands to veer chain on account of a pampero which had blown up. They were short-handed, only three men being on board besides the captain and mate, several others having gone ashore for the night. In response to the summons no one appeared, and, on entering the forecastle, the mate found two English sailors weltering in their blood, stabbed to death by a stiletto. The third man, this very same Spaniard, had disappeared, taking with him a light yawl. That he had committed the crime was undoubted."

"An' how did the pore young lady git in such a fix as we found her?" asked the sympathetic old skipper, deeply interested.

"Ah! that is the sorrowful part of it. The bark—I believe it was named the *Cadez*—struck a gale several days ago. She was bound for Buenos Ayres with lumber, and on the first night of the storm a huge wave sent her on her beam ends, carrying away the captain and a half-dozen men. The rest became so terrified that they launched a boat and disappeared in the darkness, leaving the girl to her fate. The way she happened to be clad in male attire was on account of her father's wish that she should so dress while at sea. Her name is Manchita."

As he concluded, the middy came running up, and handed Lovering a case, from which the young surgeon extracted a large bottle containing an amber-colored oily liquid.

"This is the potent factor which, I think, will show them the error of their ways," he said, calmly.

CHAPTER XI.

A DARING CAPTURE.

"What do you call that, anyhow?" asked the skipper, eying the bottle incredulously.

"It is nitrate of amyl, a volatile oil having the power to suffocate one if inhaled long enough," replied George, carefully removing the glass stopper and taking a cautious sniff. "It has the odor of over-ripe bananas, and seems harmless enough at first. Now, what I propose to do is to throw this bottle down the forecastle so that it will break. We can then clap on the hatch covers and await results."

"Will it kill them?" asked Mr. Goodrich, dubiously.

"No; not if they have sense enough to surrender, which I think they will as soon as they get a whiff of my persuader."

It was certainly a novel idea, and seemed better than resorting to gunpowder. The old gentleman had every confidence in Lovering, and decided to let him try the scheme. Addressing him to that effect, he ordered the captain to first notify those below to come on deck or stand the consequences, which the hardy old mariner did in his characteristic way.

"Now, do ye hear there?" he bawled, thumping the hatch with his pistol. "The commodore will give ye one

more chance to surrender, an' if ye ain't out of the fo'c's'le before I count ten, ye'll run athwart something as'll open yer eyes."

A derisive shout came from below, followed by the sharp report of a revolver, and every one dodged instinctively. The battle had commenced in earnest. Nevertheless, the skipper, true to his word, began counting, but he added pungent expressions of disgust and warning at the same time.

"One! ye apology for a seafaring man! Two! If I had the say, I'd give ye a dose of smoke! Three! You other men had better leave that dago and——"

Bang! bang! The captain, in his anger, had approached too near the opening, and as a result, his glazed hat tumbled to the deck with a bullet-hole in it. It was a narrow escape, and one the skipper, retreating to a safe distance, appreciated. Wiping his shining bald head with a huge cotton handkerchief, he sputtered with rage:

"Bowlines! but I believe the shark meant to shoot me. Commodore, we can't stand this any longer. If you don't want the mutineers to take the ship, we'd better be doing something."

The old gentleman agreed with him, and requested George to proceed with his experiment. The latter, first directing several men to stand by the hatch covers in readiness to haul them over at the command, crept cautiously toward the head of the ladder. Before he reached there, an exclamation from Mr. Goodrich caused him to look back.

"Wait a moment, Lovering," he cried. "Where is Jack? He was here a second ago."

The middy had slipped away unperceived. His absence was noteworthy, at that moment especially, as he would hardly miss the impending proceedings without some good reason. That he had one was shortly made apparent.

While acting as an interested spectator of Captain Breeze's interview with the occupants of the forecastle, he suddenly bethought himself of a scheme, which, if carried out, might result in the capture of the sailors without trouble. He remembered that a narrow passageway connected one-half of the forecastle with the engine-room. The former apartment was divided by a partition, one side being used by firemen and the other by deck hands. He also knew that a door connected the two places, and that it was generally locked.

The engineer's force invariably entered their quarters by way of this passage, while the sailors used the regular hatch. Juan Lopez and his companions were in the mariner's division.

Jack reasoned that if he could enter the firemen's forecastle and open the partition door, he could surprise the mutineers and force them on deck at the point of a revolver. He did not wish to make known his intentions, for fear that the old gentleman would stop him; so, quietly creeping down into the engine-room, he passed Mr. Watts without being noticed, and walked into the passageway.

He had his pistols ready, and with pulse beating a little

more quickly than usual, gained the room without attracting attention. Once there, he listened for a moment at the door. All was silent on the other side, and he at first thought they had gone on deck to surrender. But suddenly the slight noise of a match being rubbed against the partition sounded.

The villains were going to carry out their threat and fire the yacht!

The middy hesitated no longer. Giving the door a sharp wrench, he forced it open, and, with revolvers leveled, bounded over the threshold.

"On deck, all of you, or I'll fire!"

If the vessel had foundered beneath their feet, the men would not have been more astounded. The summons came like a clap of thunder, and, cowering before Gordon's weapons, they involuntarily threw up their hands and begged him not to shoot.

It was plainly evident he had come just in time. The fragments of a straw mattress scattered about the deck, and a half-burnt match lying near showed that one minute longer would have proved fatal. It was hard to believe that the villains, desperate though they were, would sacrifice their own lives in such a manner. In all probability they only meant to raise a dense smoke for the purpose of intimidating those on deck.

However, their plans were nipped in the bud. Jack was master of the situation, and in obedience to a second command they sullenly backed up the forecastle ladder and out on deck, before the startled gaze of all. Closely

following, came the triumphant middy, his pistols covering the mutineers.

"Here are your mutineers, Mr. Goodrich," he said, coolly indicating them with a wave of his revolvers. "Better lock them up at once."

"Well, this beats navigation!" gasped Captain Breeze, staring from Lopez to Gordon in amazement. "How on 'arth did ye manage it?"

"Easy enough," laughed Jack. "I simply flanked the enemy. But where are you going to stow them?"

By this time the old gentleman and the rest had recovered sufficiently to proceed to action. While Gordon and the skipper kept them covered with their pistols, several of the crew tightly bound the quartette with stout ropes. Then they were conducted with scant ceremony down to the forecastle again, it having been decided to confine the four men there temporarily.

Lopez had not uttered a word since Jack had captured him so cleverly. He seemed discomfited, to such a degree that he could only gnash his teeth with impotent rage, and cast maledictions under his breath at those around him. His companions were evidently badly frightened at their situation. One of them, a rather respectable-appearing lad, glanced appealingly at Jack, and was apparently on the point of addressing him, when Juan, noticing the action, savagely bade him hold his tongue.

"Let the man speak if he wants to," commanded the middy, sternly, "and tell how ashamed he is to be found

in the company of such a villainous rogue as you are." Then, turning to the other, he told him to continue.

But the fellow was evidently intimidated, and hung his head in silence. Mentally resolving to keep him in mind, Jack assisted Captain Breeze and the crew to convey them below. They were placed in bunks with their manacles loosened sufficiently to enable them to lie comfortably. Then, leaving old Brett to keep the deck, and another sailor on guard, the party retired aft to talk over the matter.

CHAPTER XII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

"This is not a very auspicious commencement to our journey," remarked Mr. Goodrich, with a sigh, after they had taken seats in the main saloon.

"No great harm has been done as yet," replied Jack, cheerfully; "and it is just as well that we found out the true character of this man Lopez and his mates before getting very far down the coast. Now we can land them at the nearest port, turn the rascals over to the authorities, and proceed on our way rejoicing."

"But it will make us short-handed if we cannot ship others in their places."

"I'll venture we can secure any number of good men for a chance like this, no matter where we call," affirmed the young surgeon; "but, by the way, where are you going to put in?"

"We will have to talk that over now," answered the old gentleman. "Let me see; we must be a good distance south by this time, are we not, captain?"

"Morning observations showed latitude thirty-nine degrees, eighteen minutes, an' about fifty-nine degrees longitude," replied the skipper, glancing at a notebook taken from his pocket.

"Which is the nearest town of any size?"

"Well, I think we are about as close to Bahia Blanca as any."

"You are right, captain," the middy chimed in. "We cannot be over two hundred miles from there now. If I remember rightly, it's up a river on the lower Argentine coast, and forms the nucleus of a port which promises to become important. The natives call it the Liverpool of South America. I think that is the best place we can leave our mutineers, as it is on the way down and will not cause much delay."

"All right, we will call in there," decided Mr. Goodrich finally. "Captain Breeze, please change your course accordingly."

The skipper departed to fulfill his injunctions, leaving those in the cabin to talk over other matters. The excitement of the morning had driven all idea of food from their minds. It was now close on noon, and Sam Sorreltop had been hovering around like an ebony interrogation point, awaiting the words to prepare breakfast.

At last, the old gentleman, hearing a prodigious clattering of dishes in the pantry, ordered the meal brought in. Marie and Manchita did not appear, the latter being still too overcome with grief at the loss of her father to leave the stateroom. Her situation was a melancholy one, and she had the sympathy of all on board. Mr. Goodrich resolved to give her a home so long as she wished to stay, and, as both girls were mutually taken with each other, there was every prospect that she would eventually make her home with the family.

It had been ascertained that she did not possess rela-

tions near enough to warrant her in returning, and, as the wrecked bark represented her fathers entire property, she was fortunate in having such a chance offered her.

After breakfast Mr. Goodrich and the young officers adjourned to the skipper's room. Taking a chart, the latter pointed out their position. As he had previously intimated, they were only a comparatively short distance from Bahia Blanca, and one day's steaming would carry them there.

"I will breathe more freely when once rid of those scoundrels," said the commodore, looking slightly careworn. "The very idea of having such a cruel, remorseless wretch as that man Lopez must be on the same vessel as myself and daughter renders me uneasy."

"Well, there is one thing certain," spoke up Lovering, grimly; "he will be severely punished for mutiny, even if they cannot prove him guilty of the other charge."

"Will not Manchita be retained as a witness in that case?" suddenly asked Jack, glancing up from the chart.

"No; I hardly think so," replied the old gentleman. "They will probably take her deposition and let it go at that."

"This here law an' me don't agree," growled Captain Breeze, from the door, where he had gone to take a "squint" at the weather. "When a man's guilty like them sharks, I b'lieve in the stringing of them to the yardarm. It only costs the wear an' tear of rope an' the job's done. You take it on shore; they'll palaver an' palaver for months, an' like as not set him adrift because some smart

lawyer chap has found a flaw in the 'dictment or whatsoever they call it."

The rest indulged in a quiet laugh at the skipper's strong views on the subject, and then separated until later. Mr. Goodrich retired to his room to look over some papers, while Gordon concluded to take a peep at the prisoners.

Old Brett still had charge of the bridge. He was a sea-faring man of long experience, and only the lack of education prevented him from occupying a higher position than boatswain. Navigation is a study in itself which men, otherwise illiterate, can master if they strive hard enough. But Ben thought he could shine better where nature and the school of adversity had placed him. When spoken to on the subject, he invariably answered that he would rather be a good seaman than a poor mate —a resolution worthy of imitation.

The storm had long since departed for other latitudes, leaving a fair sky and an only slightly turbulent sea. The *Marie* was plowing her way steadily toward the southwest under the combined influence of the engines and a couple of fore-and-aft sails, which had been set an hour or so previous. At her present speed the entrance to the river leading up to their destination ought to be sighted by daylight, and the port, some twenty odd miles up, reached two hours later.

As Jack and the young surgeon walked forward, they speculated on the probable outcome of the expedition, and also talked over the incidents of the past few days. From their appearance of genial satisfaction, it was evident they

did not regret the several adventures which had befallen them.

Pausing at the hatchway for a moment, they listened, and hearing nothing below, descended. The middy was in advance. As he reached the bottom of the ladder he saw something which caused him to step back and signal to Lovering to stop.

Standing over in the corner of the apartment was the Spaniard talking earnestly to the sailor who had been detailed as guard. Lopez was evidently so engrosssed in the conversation that he had not heard the noise made by the young officers as they came down. The rope with which he was bound had apparently been loosened by some one, as he was able to walk, and gesticulate slightly with one arm.

The sailor seemed deeply interested, and suddenly they heard him utter an exclamation of surprise which Lopez checked with a warning glance. The two listeners did not wait for further developments, but walked into the forecastle.

"Is this the way you stand guard over prisoners placed in your charge?" sternly demanded the middy.

At their unexpected entrance the sailor had quickly started back from the Spaniard's side, but seeing that the young officers were evidently suspicious, he checked himself, and turning to Lopez, exclaimed:

"Ah! here he is now. Ask him yourself."

He then added hastily, now addressing Jack:

"This man was a wanting to speak to you, sir, and I was just telling of him to wait a bit when you come in."

The pretense was so transparent that Gordon simply looked at him with contempt and replied, coldly:

"Very well; you can go on deck and tell Captain Breeze that I have taken charge of these men. Also ask him to please step down here at once."

The man obeyed, but with such a sullen air that Jack was attempted to address him more sharply. However, seeing that it would not help matters at present, he allowed him to depart. Lopez attempted to speak, but he was told to keep quiet, and the young officers conversed together in low tones until the skipper arrived.

He was highly indignant when told of the discovery, and threatened to lock the man up with the prisoners. Another guard was selected, this time with more care, and they returned to the deck.

That night Breeze and the middy visited the forecastle every half hour during their respective watches, but nothing occurred to indicate further trouble. Just after daybreak land was sighted dead ahead. As they approached nearer, certain marks showing the entrance to the river became apparent, and, under the guidance of a local pilot, picked up at the bar, the *Marie* was shortly brought to an anchor off the thriving port of Bahia Blanca.

The town proper at that time was a few miles inland, only the shipping wharves and landing docks being on the river's bank. There was but little shipping in port; two or three barks, a coastwise steamer, and one peculiarly-shaped craft which Jack, after a close inspection through a spyglass, pronounced to be a seagoing torpedo boat flying the Argentine colors.

It was resolved that Mr. Goodrich, Lovering and Gordon should go on shore at once, accompanied by Captain Breeze and Mr. Watts, the skipper landing for the purpose of "drumming up" sailors to fill the impending vacancies, and the engineer to see after repairs.

After giving strict injunctions to Ben Brett, left in temporary command, to exercise the greatest care in guarding the prisoners, the party was rowed ashore. Leaving the skipper and Watts on the dock, the rest took train for the town. After an absence of several hours, during which time they had interviewed the local authorities and arranged matters satisfactorily, they returned to the port. As the train slowed up at the temporary station, Jack, who was standing on the car platform, suddenly uttered an exclamation of consternation, and pointed to the river. There, just faintly visible against a dark background of trees, was their yacht, steaming out to sea!

CHAPTER XIII.

ON BOARD THE YACHT.

Startling changes had taken place on board the *Marie* during the absence of her owner and the young officers. If they had known the result of their trip ashore, it would not have been taken, of a verity. The power of gold is mighty, and the influence over evil-disposed minds, of that one word, cannot be measured.

Juan Lopez was a shrewd man—shrewd in crime and cunning in his wicked works. He knew that his situation was desperate, and that a long term in prison awaited his conviction. Trammeled like a wild beast in the little forecastle of the yacht, he chafed with impotent rage and cudgled his brain for schemes to escape.

He would have hesitated at nothing—not even the taking of human life—to effect that end, but with his arms bound and a stalwart sentry pacing the deck two feet away, the chance was dubious. Still he had one little ray of hope which caused his face to partially lose its expression of baffled fury. He knew that one on board had hearkened to his lavish promises, and if he could only be won over, the rest would be easy. Several loaded pistols smuggled down; a release from the rope lashing, and——

The murderous glare which filled his eyes finished the sentence!

Ben Brett, left in command, felt his responsibility keenly. He fully realized the dangerous character of the Spaniard, and placed his most trustworthy man over him. This happened to be a young sailor named Dawson, who also filled the position of chief quartermaster on board, having charge of the pilot house and the cleaning thereof.

He was stationed with strict orders to remain in the forecastle at all hazards, and fully meant to carry out his commands, but while walking up and down the narrow confines of his post, he suddenly remembered having forgotten to polish the binnacle cover; a trivial matter, truly, but unpardonable in the eyes of that strict disciplinarian, Captain Breeze.

Dawson courted a reputation for attention to duty, and therefore did not care to relegate the work to another man. If he could only ask some one to take his place temporarily, he could finish the polishing and return before Brett, engaged at something in the commodore's room, would notice his absence.

As if in answer to his wishes, one of the deck hands came down the ladder. Here was an opportunity. Calling him to one side, Dawson hurriedly requested him to remain in his place a few minutes, and, on meeting with a ready response, turned over the loaded revolver carried by the sentries, and disappeared on deck.

The working of fate is inscrutable. A singular chance had placed in Lopez's hands the weapon he desired. The new guard was the sailor whom Jack had discovered communicating with the Spaniard. He had not been placed

in durance vile simply because the yacht was shorthanded, owing to the mutiny, and every man counted.

The skipper had lectured him severely, and threatened dire punishments only known to ancient mariners, if he disobeyed again. The man's apparent humility and promises of future obedience mollified the old salt, and he restored him to duty.

Lopez's swarthy face grew bright with hope when he saw the change. After Dawson had departed, he eagerly beckoned Morgan, the new man, over to him, and such was the power of his persuasion that in half a minute he stood free from the lashing. It did not take long to liberate the others. Then he hurriedly explained his plans. He knew who had gone ashore, and learned from the ex-sentry where the balance of the crew were.

"Only seven men on board beside ourselves, eh? And we number five. Not such great odds after all, when we have these to help us."

He fondled the revolver significantly while speaking, and then extricated a keen-bladed knife from some mysterious hiding-place in his clothes.

At the sight of the murderous weapon Morgan involuntarily drew back and muttered hoarsely:

"No—no! Can't we seize the yacht without bloodshed?"

Lopez eyed him contemptuously for a moment, then replied, dryly:

"Of course we can. There won't be a hair of their heads harmed. Oh no! certainly not."

He ended with a harsh little laugh not pleasant to hear, and then continued his explanation:

"You four men understand me and what I have told you. If we succeed in this you will get what I promised. Now to work. Morgan, you slip around through the firemen's passageway and get what weapons you can from the skipper's room. While you are gone we will look after Dawson. It will be an easy matter to secure him. I think I hear some one coming now. Quick! out of the way."

Morgan stepped through the door into the firemen's forecastle and hurried aft. The Spaniard took the rope which had been used in binding him, and crawling under the companion ladder, placed it so the approaching sailor would step in the coils. In obedience to a whispered order, the other mutineers laid down in their usual places.

Down the steps came Dawson, whistling a rollicking air. He felt light-hearted and contented with the world, and was just on the point of greeting Morgan with a cheery laugh when his feet touched the trap—a sudden jerk and both legs slipped through the ladder, bringing him headlong on the hard pine deck. One single groan, and then silence.

"He is settled, for a time, at least," exclaimed Lopez, stooping over the inanimate body. "Here, help me bind and gag him. Hurry up, now; we haven't any time to lose."

It did not take the four very long to secure Dawson. He was entirely helpless, and they soon had him stowed away in one of the bunks. By that time Morgan re-

turned, bringing two revolvers and a shotgun obtained in the captain's room. He reported that Brett was still aft, but had almost finished his work.

"We will trap him next," said Juan; "and I think the best plan is to get him down here by some excuse."

"Suppose I go and tell him that Dawson wants to see him at once," suggested the young sailor.

"A good idea," exclaimed the Spaniard. "You are proving a great help, my lad, and I will remember you."

While he was gone on his new mission, they arranged the rope as before, and awaited the next victim. One of the mutineers, a man named Bob, was selected to stand in readiness to strike Brett with the butt of the shotgun in case the trap failed to work. This precaution was deemed necessary as old Ben constituted the main prize. With him secured, the vessel was almost theirs.

Presently footsteps were heard on deck, approaching the hatch. They halted near the companionway and a voice called out:

"Hello, down there. What d'ye want, Dawson?" came suddenly from Brett.

"Just come here a moment," replied Bob at a signal from the Spaniard. He spoke in muffled tones, and blurred the words as much as possible.

Suspecting nothing, Ben slowly descended the stairs and walked into the trap. This time it did not work so successfully. The rope only caught on his ankle, causing him to stumble slightly. Before he could recover, however, Bob brought his gun down with a sharp blow on the old man's head, felling him like a log. In less time than

it takes to describe it, he was trussed securely and dragged to the forward end.

"Now, whom have we left?" mused Lopez, counting on his fingers. "Let me see; there's the assistant engineer and two firemen working in the engine room, and the cook and Sam Sorreltop aft in the cabin. I think the best thing to do is for all hands to see after the engine force first. The two negroes don't amount to much. We will go through the passageway, and when we reach the fireroom, cover all three with our guns and force them to surrender. Don't shoot if you can help it, as I want to use them."

Followed by the rest, Lopez cautiously made his way to the fireroom door. They could hear the sounds of hammering inside and knew that all were at work. After seeing everything in readiness, the Spaniard stepped boldly through the portal, and pointing his revolver at the assistant engineer, cried:

"Throw up your hands, or I'll shoot!"

CHAPTER XIV.

FURTHER INCIDENTS.

At the command, given in a determined voice, Adams, the assistant engineer, looked up quickly from the crank shaft on which he had been working. He held a hammer in his right hand, and at the unexpected sight, dropped it with a clang on the iron plates.

"Wha—wha—t's this?" exclaimed he, in a fright, instinctively shrinking away from the revolvers.

"Throw up your hands, I tell you," repeated Lopez, impatiently.

The order was obeyed immediately. Elevating his arms to a painful degree, the terrified man stood trembling in every limb. Just behind him was one of the firemen who, when he saw the five men, also made signs of surrender, at the same time exclaiming excitedly:

"Gosh! the mutineers!"

The other stoker was not visible at first, but presently, attracted by the sound of loud talking, his face appeared at the door leading into the fireroom. One glance was enough, and before they could stop him, he vanished again.

"After him!" cried Juan, hurriedly. "Quick! catch the fool before he gets on deck. Here, Bob, you stay and guard the others. Shoot them down if they make a move."

L. of C.

Two of the men bounded through the door, while the Spaniard, accompanied by the third, rapidly scaled the ladder leading above. They reached the deck too late. The frightened fireman had been too quick for them, and, as they passed out of the hatch, they saw him standing on the rail, waving his hands and calling for help.

With a loud imprecation, Lopez dashed forward, but just as he made a grasp for the man's leg, the fellow sprang over the side. Five seconds later he reappeared, and struck out lustily for a bark lying near by.

The mutineers stood aghast for a moment. If he reached the vessel and gave the alarm, their plans would be frustrated beyond a doubt. Secrecy and an hour's hard work was necessary to get the yacht under way. Too much time had been wasted already, and Captain Breeze might return at any moment. A wholesome fear of that doughty tar made them all the more anxious to escape before such a catastrophe could take place.

Suddenly Lopez pointed alongside to where a light skiff was attached to the gangway ladder. It had been lowered to clean the yacht's side, and as his eyes fell upon it, a way of capturing the fugitive flashed over him. Calling to one man to follow him, he jumped into the boat, and cutting the painter with his knife, commenced pulling after the swimmer with all his power. The fellow had a good start, and fear gave strength to his arms, but the light boat, propelled by four lusty oars, soon overtook him.

By this time the attention of the bark's crew had been attracted, and several figures appeared over the rail. The

boat was about midway between the two vessels when it overtook the fireman, and within hailing distance of both. Just as Lopez reached over to grasp him, the man partially raised himself out of the water and shouted:

"Help! help! Mutiny! Save——"

He did not finish the appeal. With a quick movement the Spaniard shoved his head under the water, effectually choking him. Then, with the aid of the other man, he was dragged into the skiff and tumbled on the bottom.

"If you make another sound, I'll kill you!" hissed Juan, pressing the point of a knife against his throat. Then, turning to his companion, he ordered him to row back to the *Marie* as fast as possible.

Before they had fairly started a hail came from the bark, asking the cause of the trouble, and the oarsman, who faced aft, could see that preparations were being made to lower a boat. Something must be done to allay suspicion. Lopez was equal to the emergency.

"The man is crazy," he replied, loudly. "Too much rum, that's all. He got away from the forecastle and jumped overboard before we could stop him."

"Want any help?"

"No; we can handle him."

Those on board the vessel idly watched the skiff for a while, and then returned to their work, apparently satisfied. Such occurrences are not uncommon, and the answer seemed plausible enough.

Laughing in their sleeve at the success of their stratagem, the mutineers soon reached the yacht with their captive, and shoved him on board. He did not make any

further attempt at resistance, but quietly obeyed orders, seemingly content with the assurance given him by Lopez that he would not be illtreated.

In the meantime the two men left on deck had been having a little experience of their own. When the Spaniard pulled away in chase of the fugitive, they started back for the engineroom intending to assist Bob in standing guard, but happening to glance aft, one of them saw Sam Sorreltop coming up the companionway to ascertain the cause of the commotion.

In the excitement of the moment the two girls, Sam and the cook had been forgotten. If they heard of the mutineers' release, an alarm would undoubtedly be given from that quarter. It was high time they were secured as well.

The red-headed negro lad stopped suddenly on seeing them, and, with an exclamation of surprise, made a dash for the steps leading below. They heard him stumble in his haste, and then a heavy thud proclaimed that he had reached the bottom, probably more frightened than hurt. Both men ran nimbly toward the hatch, and were on the point of descending, when Lopez was observed returning. One remained to watch the companionway, while the other hastened forward to meet the Spaniard.

The three mutineers with their captive immediately entered the engineroom. Bob was found sitting on a repair bench keeping a wary eye on the engineer and the other fireman. They had not stirred from their former position, with the exception of their hands, which had dropped from sheer exhaustion.

"Now look here!" exclaimed Juan, striding up to Adams and menacing him with a revolver. "We are going to take this yacht out of Bahia Blanca at once, and I want you to have that engine ready to turn over in five minutes. If you refuse, I'll blow your brains out. Obey, and no harm will come to you, and possibly some good—but we will talk about that afterward. What do you say?"

"Will you set me ashore as soon as you can spare me?" Adams asked, hurriedly.

"Yes; I will promise you that, if you will get up steam as soon as possible. How long will it take you?"

"With the help of two men I can finish these repairs and get under way in half an hour."

"No! no! thirty minutes will ruin us. Can't you let the repairs go and spread fires at once?"

The expression on the Spaniard's face was so threatening that Adams, who had said that simply to gain time, hurriedly replied that he would try his best to put the machinery together immediately. He also advised Lopez to place as many men as he could spare in the fireroom without delay.

"I'll do that," replied the latter, then turning to Bob, he ordered him to take the fireman who had tried to escape and the one left in the engineroom and start fires at once. Detailing another man to watch the engineer and also assist him, Lopez told Morgan to follow him on deck. They walked aft to where the remaining mutineer was still watching the hatch.

"How is it down there?" asked Juan.

"I saw the nigger pop his head out a moment ago, but he ran when he caught sight of me."

"Come along; we will soon fix them."

Down the steps the trio went, thinking they had an easy task before them. But they reckoned without the knowledge that two negroes and a large dog form a combination not to be despised.

The cook was an African who had been in Mr. Goodrich's service at home, and he was devoted to both his master and Marie. Rather peculiar and retiring in disposition, yet he could display some sagacity and strength of character when an emergency called. He would have willingly laid down his life for his beloved mistress, so, when Sam, with eyes protruding and face blanched almost white, ran into the galley adjoining the pantry and told him what was occurring on deck, he first threw up his hands and then reached for a cook's invariable weapon—a kettle of hot water.

Bidding the negro lad call both Marie and Manchita into the galley, he secured a sharp carving knife and his favorite razor, and thus prepared for defense, awaited the enemy. The two girls, not dreaming of danger, entered the little apartment, followed by the dog, Shag, and seeing the cook's attitude, hurriedly asked the reason.

"It's nothing at all, honey," replied the sable guardian, trying to appear cheerful. "On'y a leetle scrap on deck, which might brung trouble. Jes' you uns git in dar back o' the stove, an' Sam an' me will pertect yer."

"But what is the matter, William?" demanded Marie,

her face paling with apprehension. "Tell us at once. I know it is more serious than you acknowledge."

But the faithful negro gently pushed them back out of harm's way and stepped to the door. Sam picked up an ax lying near by, and stood ready to strike.

Suddenly Shag, who had been looking from one to the other with an intelligent glance, growled fiercely, and showing his fangs, made a bound for the door.

CHAPTER XV.

DOWN THE RIVER.

Juan Lopez and his two companions halted at the bottom of the steps when they saw the saloon was empty. Listening for a moment, they heard nothing save a gentle murmur of the tide against the iron hull, or the distant scrape of a shovel in the fireroom. The silence was ominous.

"I wonder where those niggers have hidden themselves?" whispered the leader, peering into an adjacent stateroom.

Finding nothing there, he bade them follow him, and walked toward the partition dividing the dining saloon and main cabin.

Grasping the heavy curtains, he jerked them roughly aside and then started back in alarm. A black object shot forward and before he could escape, Shag's glistening teeth were fastened in his throat. The attack came so unexpectedly that Lopez was borne to the deck, where he lay struggling with the powerful dog until one of the men, grasping Shag by the shoulders, pulled him away.

"The brute!" gasped the Spaniard, tenderly feeling his neck, where a line of red marks showed the effect of the animal's incisors. "Shoot him, some one. Don't let the cur escape!"

But with a sagacity worthy of human intelligence, the brave defender darted into the galley, where he crouched at Sam's feet, growling ferociously.

"Here, you niggers; come out of that room; I want to speak to you," Juan called out, advancing to the door. "If you submit quietly, no harm will happen you."

Not receiving an answer, the three men walked boldly up and were just in the act of leveling their revolvers when a panful of boiling water came through the opening, striking them full in the face. Before they had time to fire in return, another shower struck them, and, half blinded by the scalding liquid, they turned and fled to the deck, howling with agony.

Down below, William and Sam danced around the galley in high glee, overjoyed at their success. Then, after the cook's exuberance had slightly abated, he filled every vessel in his collection with either water or fat.

"Won'er if it's hot 'nuff for them muttoneers?" chuckled Sam, slapping his thigh. But happening to notice the expression of terrified apprehension on the faces of the two girls, he restrained his mirth, and with uncouth gallantry told them to not be alarmed.

Both Marie and Manchita viewed the situation with increasing terror. The latter knew from past experience what an unscrupulous villain the Spaniard was, and she had every reason to fear his vengeance. She was a girl whose nature had been strengthened, and her self-reliance expanded by long voyages with her father, but the fact of being imprisoned on board a vessel together with half-a-dozen lawless men, daunted even her courage.

She was still capable of advising, however, and under her direction they prepared a method of defense which promised to give Lopez a warm reception in case he meditated another attack.

On reaching the deck after their hasty retreat, the three men immediately sought out a bucket of water to cool their burning faces. Hot as the scalds were, they seemed as ice compared with the heat of their tempers. The trio was literally wild with rage, and if Sam and the cook had been within easy reach just then, their lives would have undoubtedly paid the penalty.

As it was, one of the men wanted to return to the cabin and open a fusillade on the galley partition, but Lopez restrained him, remarking with a diabolical grin:

"Just wait until we get to sea; we'll have a revenge on them black monkeys which will satisfy even you."

After deliberating a moment, the Spaniard told one of his men to descend to the saloon and keep watch on the pantry door from the foot of the stairs.

"If any one appears, shoot to kill," he added; "and whatever you do, don't let them give an alarm from the dead lights. Now, Morgan, come with me. Steam ought to be up by this time."

On reaching the engineroom they found Adams just completing the repairs. In reply to a question he told Lopez that he would be ready to start in five minutes. The steam gauge registered one hundred and twenty pounds, a fact the Spaniard noticed with satisfaction.

"Good enough," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands. "We'll be clear of this river in a couple of hours, and then,

ho! for freedom. Morgan, go forward with a hammer and stand ready to slip the anchor chain. I'll take a man out of the fireroom for the wheel. I think I had better put on one of the skipper's uniforms in case we are watched from other vessels."

Suiting the action to the word, he went on deck, and donning a cap and coat belonging to the captain, mounted the bridge. A few minutes later, Adams called up the speaking tube that everything was in working order. Juan thereupon signaled him with the indicator to go ahead slowly, and, on seeing the yacht move slightly, called out to the young sailor forward to let go the cable. With a harsh rattle the detached end of the anchor chain passed through the hawsehole and splashed into the river.

As the tide was coming in, the vessel's bow pointed down stream, so all that remained to be done was to ring up full speed and keep within the buoys. For the information of inland readers who are not conversant with navigation, it is well to state that large iron cylinders are placed on the boundary lines of deep water in all frequented rivers to mark the channel. Therefore, in this case the Spaniard had only to steer the yacht between them to insure a safe passage.

After getting under way, Lopez took a survey of surrounding objects with the glasses. He knew that such a sudden departure would attract some attention, but he was hardly prepared for the interest taken in his movements by vessels anchored near by. He felt rather uneasy on seeing the crew of a steamer which he had to pass, point toward him and then on shore. Looking in that direc-

tion, he noticed a rapidly-increasing crowd on the dock. Standing on one of the stringpieces was a man frantically waving his arms. Every few minutes he would make a trumpet of his hands and apparently hail the yacht. The distance proved too great to catch the words, but Lopez recognized the figure.

It was Captain Breeze!

The sight of the familiar form converted the Spaniard into a veritable mad man. Beckoning wildly to Morgan, he fiercely ordered him to tell the engineer that if more revolutions were not obtained immediately, he would throw him into his own fires. Then striding up and down the narrow bridge, he shook his clinched fist in the skipper's direction, and muttered maledictions in one unceasing stream.

Presently a thick volume of black smoke commenced coming from the funnel, and a strong quivering of the hull showed that his threat had taken effect. The *Marie* had never been driven so hard before. The throb of the powerful engines could be heard on the bridge, and as Lopez listened, it formed a rhythm to him, the burden of which was freedom.

There are several turns in the river below Bahia Blanca, so it was not long before the anchorage had disappeared behind a heavily-wooded bank. The last view Juan obtained did not reveal whether pursuit was imminent or not, but he knew a vessel would be started in chase as soon as possible. His only hope for escape rested in the speed of the yacht. If the engine broke down, or

some misadventure happened to retard them, capture was certain.

With these not very pleasant thoughts for companions, the mutineer paced back and forth on the gratings, keeping a watchful eye for any sign of pursuit. It was fortunate for him that a recent freshet had swollen the stream, as several times, unskillful handling carried the vessel outside the buoys. However, nothing occurred to delay their course, and several hours after leaving the city the *Marie* steamed into the broad bosom of the Atlantic.

A moderate breeze was blowing outside, just enough to ripple the water into miniature white-capped waves, but it had no effect other than to tumble them about a little. After getting well clear of the land, Lopez changed the course due south, and descending from the bridge, ordered the helmsman to keep her heading in that direction until further notice. Then passing aft, he looked through a hatch into the engineroom. Adams was busily engaged oiling the machinery, closely watched by the man who had been detailed for that purpose. From the direction of the fireroom came a rattling of iron shovels and an occasional bang of a furnace door. All was satisfactory in that department.

Going farther aft, the Spaniard halted at the cabin stairs and hailed the saloon. He was immediately answered with a request to come below. On reaching the bottom, he found the guard comfortably seated in an easy chair, with his revolver pointing toward the galley.

"Nothing has happened since you left, cap," reported the man, with a grin. "Except the sight of a bit of red

wool now and again. They know I'm here and ready for business."

Bidding him keep a close watch until later, the Spaniard returned to the deck. As he emerged from the companionway he glanced toward the river's mouth, and there saw something which caused his face to blanch with despair.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PURSUIT.

Leaving the Spaniard engaged in his nefarious work on board the yacht, we will return to Mr. Goodrich and his party.

When Jack called their attention to his unexpected discovery, and pointed down the river to where the *Marie* could be seen rapidly disappearing from view, a horror fell upon the three which rendered them speechless for the moment.

They glanced from one to the other, each afraid to utter his thoughts until at last the old gentleman, his face white with apprehension, groaned:

"What—what can this mean? What has happened?"

"I don't know," slowly answered the middy, avoiding Mr. Goodrich's eye; "but it looks as if something has occurred since we left. Do not be alarmed, sir. If the mutineers have broken loose and captured the yacht, their triumph will be short lived, as there are plenty of vessels in port to pursue them."

"Let us find Captain Breeze; we can obtain an explanation from him," suggested George.

"Yes; he will know all," replied the afflicted father, rapidly leaving the car and hurrying toward the wharf, followed by the others. "My dear friends, if anything

has befallen Marie it will break my heart—it will break my heart."

Gordon and the young surgeon could find no word to comfort him. They feared the worst, as both knew there could be no other reason for the vessel sailing save an outbreak among the prisoners on board.

It had been a fatal mistake on the part of all in not sending them ashore immediately after arrival in port. Jack regretted his short-sightedness in not advising the owner to that effect, but it was too late for complaints now; only prompt action would redeem the error.

The station platform was only a short distance from the water front, so, after walking a few steps, the party turned the corner of a large freight shed and emerged on the docks. The first thing that attracted their attention was a crowd of men at the head of the wharf. They were evidently excited about something, and as our party came into view, a man detached himself from the group and ran toward them.

They soon recognized Captain Breeze. He was bare headed and was out of breath, but on reaching them he managed to gasp:

"The yacht, commodore! Those villains have stolen her and ran off with all on board!"

"Oh, Breeze! what will we do? Advise me, some one," exclaimed Mr. Goodrich, wringing his hands in overwhelming distress. "I will give my fortune to the one who rescues my daughter from the hands of that murderer."

On reaching the wharf, Jack had cast his eye over the

vessels in harbor. They all looked too clumsy and slow to catch the speedy yacht, and he was on the point of giving up the idea, when he saw the Argentine torpedo boat noticed that morning. She was partially hidden by-hind an American schooner, and it was only the glint of the sun on her brass funnel which caused him to recognize her.

Here was a chance. She must be fast, probably not less than twenty knots an hour, which was several more than the *Marie*. Being a government vessel, she was supposed to render assistance in such a case, and the middy knew that her commander would be glad of the chance, if only for the excitement it would bring.

He did not keep his new idea long to himself. The grief of the old gentleman and his own deep anxiety caused him to communicate the suggestion in a few words.

"Mr. Goodrich, there is the means to recover your daughter," he said, simply, pointing toward the torpedo boat. "We can have her for the asking."

"Splice my gaff! why on 'arth didn't I think o' that?" exclaimed the skipper, wonderingly. "I could have had her all ready to start."

"Well, there isn't any time to be wasted," interposed Lovering. "Where can we get a boat?"

As if in answer to his question a sailor stepped from the crowd which had collected around them when it be-came known they were from the yacht, and, touching his cap, said in English:

"I am one of the torpedo boat's crew, sir; and the yawl is moored at the end of the wharf. If you wish to go on board I will take you."

His offer was speedily accepted, and in a very few minutes the entire party was *en route*. A short pull brought them alongside, where an officer, clad in uniform, met them at the gangway. On being told the purport of their errand, he immediately invited them on board and send below for the commander. During the messenger's absence, Jack looked about him, deeply interested in the novel construction of the craft. She was a sea-going torpedo boat of the English *Thornycroft* type, and showed her speed in every line of the hull.

Built after the peculiar shape of such vessels, with flush decks and curved sides, offering little resistance to the waves or wind, she could be easily propelled at a high rate of speed by her powerful engines, and seemed capable of great endurance at sea. The living quarters were scant, as most of the room was occupied by machinery and torpedoes, but that item figured very little in their present wishes. The middy saw that with such an ally the thieving Spaniard and his confederates would soon be compelled to relinquish their stolen property, and he awaited the coming of her commanding officer with a fast growing impatience.

At last a young man, clad in the uniform of a lieutenant, emerged from the pilot house and advanced toward them. He was accompanied by another officer,

and seemed slightly excited. After greeting them politely, he plunged into the subject.

"Is it possible your yacht has been carried away in such an open-handed manner?" he asked, using excellent English; then, not waiting for a reply, he continued: "It seems like a story from an old romance. But to think that such an outrage could be perpetrated in a civilized port, and in this century, is past belief. However, the fact remains, and it is necessary to capture the mutineers at all hazards. I gladly place my vessel at your disposal, sir. All I ask is time enough to telegraph the minister of marine at Buenos Ayres."

"Your kindness and generosity shall be repaid, sir," replied Mr. Goodrich, gratefully. "And when you learn that my only daughter, as well as another young lady, is now on board the yacht, prisoners of a foul and brutal murderer, you will understand what your offer means to me. I care nothing for the vessel; she represents so much monetary value only; but it is my motherless child. Pray do not delay a moment, sir, as the handling of such a craft by an inexperienced man like the Spaniard may result in disaster at any hour."

When the old gentleman mentioned the presence of Marie on board the yacht, Jack saw the chivalrous young officer give a start of horror. Without stopping to hear further explanations, he turned hastily to his companion and issued an order which the latter acknowledged by a touch of his cap, and disappeared down an adjacent hatch. Presently a rattle of shovels below, and the appearance of

smoke from the funnel, indicated active preparations for getting under way.

Nothing had been seen of Mr. Watts, the engineer, on shore, and it was probable he had gone out to the railroad shops after spare tools. It would take too long to send after him, so they decided to leave a note at the captain of the port's office.

Captain Breeze had confined his efforts since coming on board to an open-mouthed survey of the torpedo boat. He acted like some amphibious animal out of his element, and viewed the compact craft with an unfriendly eye. Those standing near could hear him growling in an undertone, but the expressions used were utterly unintelligible, consisting mainly of nautical terms more forcible than elegant.

"Gentlemen, if you will step below and accept the poor hospitality of my cabin, I will notify you when we are ready to sail," said the commander, in friendly tones, pointing toward a small companionway near the stern.

The invitation was accepted by all save Jack, who had taken a liking to their new acquaintance and wished to remain on deck with him. After sending a message on shore, the officer gave his undivided attention to the duties incidental to getting up anchor, and soon had the ponderous piece of iron clear of the river bottom. By this time the engineer reported steam enough for working the engines, and before many minutes, the entire party, assembled on the after deck, noted with extreme satisfaction the commencement of the chase. It had been noised about the harbor that the torpedo boat was bound in pur-

suit of the mutineers, so when she commenced to move down the river, the whistle of every steamer in port bade her a boisterous *bon voyage*, and the waving of handkerchiefs and prolonged cheers carried a promise of success to the hearts of all.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHASE.

"Has any one thought of what we shall do on sighting the *Marie?*" asked Lovering, suggestively. "Remember, she has two ladies on board, and any violence offered the yacht will endanger them."

His question brought out a new phase of the matter. Preparations for following the fugitives had been of paramount interest until now, and no heed had been given to subsequent proceedings. It was high time a plan was formed to capture the mutineers, without running the risk of injuring Marie and Manchita. To do this required tact and cunning, as the desperate nature of the Spaniard rendered a display of force almost useless.

The new dilemma was discussed in all its bearings while the party descended the river. Captain Breeze bewailed the necessity of treating with the villains, except through the agency of a repeating rifle, and offered as his opinion that Juan would not surrender without a terrible struggle.

This was agreed to by Lovering, who said:

"This man Lopez has nothing to gain by giving up. He knows that a trial on shore for his many misdeeds can result in nothing less than a long term in prison, if not death. For that reason he is very liable to resort to anything."

"Much as I dislike to show mercy to such a scoundrel," put in Jack, quietly, "yet I really think the best plan will be to assure him, if we get near enough, that freedom will be granted to all concerned, if they surrender the yacht and her passengers. What say you, Mr. Goodrich?"

The old gentleman gave him a grateful glance, but his face became very grave as he replied:

"If I listen to the instincts of a parent, I would do as my young friend here suggests, but duty compels me to devote every effort to capture the mutineers. My dear child and Manchita must take their chances in the coming struggle. We will try what can be done to persuade him to surrender peaceably, but I am doubtful of a favorable result."

"Really, sir, I think you would be justified in allowing them to go free to secure your daughter's and Manchita's safety," warmly replied Gordon, furtively appealing to George for assistance in persuading the old gentleman.

"No; I must not turn such a dangerous man loose on the world again. There is a certain duty one owes his fellow men, and I would not be doing that duty if I failed to secure this human wolf."

"Hear! hear! hear!" applauded the skipper, gruffly. "Dooty's dooty, as the commodore says; but I really believe I'd ruther see them men go free than have even a hair of them girls' heads injured."

"Your sentiment does you credit, captain," chimed in Lovering, clapping the old sailor on the back. "It shows that the salt has not pickled that big heart of yours."

Then, turning to Mr. Goodrich, he continued: "I am afraid you will have to give in, sir. I must confess that I agree with Jack and the skipper. You also owe a duty to the girls, and that should be paramount. When we catch up with the yacht, as we must in a short time, I think it will be best to hoist a flag of truce, showing that we wish to speak with Lopez. Then, if he refuses to stop, we can easily run alongside, with our superior speed, and speak him, anyway."

"What kind of weapons has this here craft?" asked Captain Breeze, thoughtfully.

"I think she carries a Nordenfeldt machine gun, but it is not mounted," returned the middy; "but why do you ask?"

"Well, that Lopez might take it into his head to load the *Maric's* salutin' gun with pieces of iron an' fire on us."

"That is so," interrupted the old gentleman in a startled voice; "I never thought of that."

"We must provide for such an emergency," said Jack, rising to his feet. "I am going to talk with the commander, and ask him to make as much of a show of force as possible. He can mount his machine guns in less than an hour. I think they work on tripods which are shipped in the deck, and if he has all the parts, it will be an easy task."

"I think I will go with you, Jack," spoke up Lovering, following the middy, "and take a look around. We will soon be out of the river at this rate of speed, and then the fun will commence."

"That's Solis Point over there, boys," the skipper called after them, indicating a peculiar formation on the bank with a wave of his hand. "Nine miles from the sea. We ought to make it in forty minutes at the most. Tell that Argentine officer to hurry up with his guns, as I expect we will sight the yacht after leaving the river."

They found the lieutenant in the conning tower, directing the wheelman. It was barely large enough for two, so Jack and the young surgeon stood outside and conversed with him through the open door. The middy explained in a very few words what they anticipated on sighting the Spaniard, and the necessity of displaying as much force as possible. When the commander was told that Lopez might use the small brass cannon on board the yacht, his eyes glistened, and he rubbed his hands in evident expectation of warm work.

"Yes, I have two machine guns down below," he replied to a question of Jack's. "They haven't been mounted, on account of an order from the department requiring them kept out of the open air until needed. It will only take a short time to get them ready."

"Have you the necessary ammunition?"

"Oh, yes! two hundred pounds. Enough to sink a dozen yachts. Do you think we will have a chance to use the guns?"

"I hope not, sir," replied Jack, gravely. "Mr. Goodrich's daughter and another young lady are on board."

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed the young lieutenant. "I had forgotten that. No; it would never do to fire on

her in that case. But I suppose you wish to use several blank charges to try and frighten them?"

"Yes; I think he will see we mean business when he hears the report of a gun, but I have very little hope he will surrender. A man who has committed a triple murder in cold blood, and mutinied on the high seas, is desperate enough to do anything. I am afraid he will commit some terrible act when he sights us."

While Jack was speaking, the commander had given orders to mount the rifles. Several sailors soon appeared from below, carrying the different parts. The bodies of the guns were too heavy to bring up the narrow ladder, so they were hoisted up the forward hatch with block and tackle. The second lieutenant took charge of the work, and before many minutes had them in readiness. One was mounted just forward of the conning tower, and the other aft on the quarter.

By the time this was finished the mouth of the river could be seen a few miles distant. Mr. Goodrich and the skipper now joined the others, and every one remained silent for a time. All felt that the momentous period was near at hand. The old gentleman stood to one side, his face anxious and care-worn. A few more hours and the fate of his child would be known. Jack glanced sorrowfully at him, and his clinched hands boded ill for the cause of all the trouble.

Marie's winsome face never seemed so fair as now, when she was in such peril, and as he recalled the kindly manner in which she had bidden him good-by that morn-

ing, a lump came in his throat, and his eyes grew moist from manly emotion.

As they drew nearer the sea a dread came over them—a dread that the yacht might have disappeared. She had not left more than an hour before the torpedo boat, which, at their different rate of sailing, would place them only a few miles apart; so, if she were not in sight on leaving the river, something must have happened.

With every turn of the screw, their anxiety grew more intense, until at last Mr. Goodrich felt so overcome that he walked aft and sat down, relying on the others to convey the news. The crew of the torpedo boat had learned of their destination, and were now grouped forward of the hatch, highly interested. They seemed a hardy set of man-of-war's men, and Jack realized that if it came to actual fighting the mutineers would not last five minutes before them.

At last a long line of white-capped waves appeared in sight, revealing the presence of the bar at the mouth of the stream. A few minutes later and only a series of wooded heights shut off the view; then the sharp steel prow of the torpedo boat entered the sea, and there, in plain view toward the south, was the steam yacht *Marie,* her rakish hull lifting to the swell with graceful motions.

An involuntary cheer came from the lips of all, and Jack, in his enthusiasm, tossed his cap high in the air.

The lieutenant said something to an officer standing near, and presently the loud report of a blank charge echoed over the waters.

It was apparently unnoticed by those on board the

chase. No sign of bunting could be seen, but, instead, a dense column of black smoke came from her funnel, and the course was slightly altered.

"They are edging toward the land!" exclaimed the middy, leveling a spyglass he had taken from the conning tower.

"I'll eat a mainsail if the miserable skunk isn't a-goin' to run her ashore!" broke in Captain Breeze, excitedly dancing around the narrow deck. "Oh! if I only had these here hands on him, I'd choke his luff in two turns of a wheel!"

Mr. Goodrich appeared at this moment, and, catching the words, turned to the speaker, pale with horror. He essayed to speak, but the words stayed in his throat, and he walked away again, wringing his hands.

In the meantime the lieutenant had seen the manœuvre, and, calling on the engine-room for every possible ounce of steam, signified his intention of slipping between the yacht and the shore.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRECIOUS PAPERS.

"It will be rather dangerous," he admitted, surveying the coast with a pair of powerful binocles; "but we draw much less water than she does, and it is worth trying, anyway. I will fire another charge when we get a little nearer, and if that doesn't have any effect, we will head them off."

They had now crept close enough to distinguish figures on the *Marie's* deck, and the appearance of Lopez on the bridge, clad in a uniform belonging to Captain Breeze, aroused that worthy old salt's ire to such an extent that he fairly bubbled over. His vocabulary of strained oaths seemed unlimited, and he poured them forth in an endless stream.

Jack also felt his choler rising at the sight of that figure. He did not indulge in verbal pyrotechnics, but his thoughts were scarcely mild, and he would have willingly given a year's pay to have the fellow at hand.

Another round was fired from the forward gun, and those watching saw Lopez hurriedly climb down the bridge ladder, but he was up again almost instantly, and then they noticed several of the mutineers drag the small brass saluting howitzer from its place near the bow.

It was carried aft to the starboard quarter, and secured

to one of the hawser bitts. That they meant to fire on their pursuers was clearly proven by the actions of the men. One brought a small canvas bag of powder, which he rammed into the gun, while others were seen coming with what seemed pieces of iron.

"This is growing serious," exclaimed Lovering, lowering his glass and turning to Jack with a comical look of dismay. "The beggars are going to pot us if they can. I confess I don't like being a target without the power of striking back. If I had a good rifle I think I could keep those bloodthirsty villains away from that gun."

"A rifle? why, there are scores of them on board," replied the middy. "I'll get one for you, George, and you can try the scheme. I think, if you hit one of them, it will have a wholesome effect on the others."

Hurrying away, Gordon secured a Marteni-Henri, with several rounds of ammunition, and handed the weapon to Lovering. The young surgeon had made quite a reputation on board the *Wampum* as a sharpshooter. Long practice had rendered him very proficient at a target, and it now stood him in good stead.

The distance between the two vessels had gradually lessened, until, by the time George was ready to try his skill, they were not more than eight hundred yards apart. The mutineers were still actively engaged in preparing the howitzer for use. Three or four of them stood working round it, and Lopez could be seen directing them from the bridge.

The opportunity seemed favorable, and Lovering was just lifting the rifle to an aim, when the old gentleman,

who had been watching his preparations, asked him to wait a moment.

"We are near enough for them to hear my voice, and I am going to speak to Lopez," he said, hurriedly. "I wish to try every chance before resorting to violence."

Taking a trumpet the lieutenant had passed to him, he applied it to his lips and shouted:

"Ahoy, the yacht!"

The Spaniard looked around at the sound, but, contemptuously shaking his fist in their direction, refused to answer. Mr. Goodrich turned away with a sigh, and walked aft. Regarding the action as a tacit permission, George leveled his rifle, and, taking careful aim, pulled the trigger.

The spiteful report was followed by a faint cry of pain, and one of the mutineers was seen to throw up his arms and stagger back. The effect was salutary, however. Not stopping to finish loading their howitzer, the rest of the crew ran forward, and disappeared from view, leaving their wounded comrade on the deck.

"Bully!" shouted Captain Breeze, dancing about in high glee. "That fetched 'em. Now, can't you shoot that grinning dago on the bridge? But, hold on, Lovering, hit him in the top-hamper—I don't want them clothes spoiled."

Holding the still smoking weapon in his hands, George waited to see what the Spaniard would do. He secretly resolved to disable him next, if he obtained a chance, and it was but a very short time before the opportunity came.

At first, on seeing one of his men shot, the chief mu-

tineer stood gazing on the deck, apparently aghast; then, uttering a cry of rage, he jumped down the ladder and rushed aft, followed by one of the men. Instantly divining their intention, Lovering took rapid aim and fired. It was a miss. They kept on, and had almost reached the gun, when the young surgeon's rifle again rang out. To the joy of the watchers on the torpedo boat, the Spaniard was observed to grasp his right arm frantically, and reel against the other man.

However, the undoubtedly painful wound did not check him, and George prepared to fire a third time, when suddenly the yacht careened over and remained stationary. She had run aground!

In an instant all was confusion on board. Men poured out of the forecastle and engine-room, and, joining Lopez, stood waving their hands toward the other vessel as if imploring assistance. In the meantime the latter had shot past, and was some distance away before the engines could be stopped. Then, circling around, she steamed slowly toward the disabled craft.

In the excitement of the chase they had approached very near the coast, and now it was seen that the white, sandy line denoting the beach could not be more than half-a-mile distant. It was well the Argentine vessel drew less water, else she would have also struck. As it was, her commander felt anxious until he ran back into deeper soundings.

Where the *Marie* lay was apparently a shoal spot entirely under the surface, and giving no warning of its presence. Whether she was injured remained to be

proven. If the bottom was soft or of yielding sand, it would be an easy matter to float her again, but if the formation consisted of rock, some of the hull plates must have been broken. In that case she would probably prove a total wreck.

Meanwhile, an effort was evidently being made on board the yacht to lower a boat. Lopez could be seen issuing orders right and left, and in obedience to his commands the quarter-boat soon floated alongside. The weather was still mild, and very little sea delayed them.

Running as close as he dared, the young lieutenant hailed the mutineers, and ordered them to come to the torpedo boat. Then, rigging out a light yawl carried amidships, he informed Mr. Goodrich that it was at his disposal. The old gentleman had noticed the absence of the two girls from the deck with varying emotions. It might mean either good or evil, but hope bade him believe they had found protectors in the two servants.

Accompanied by Jack, he jumped into the yawl, and started for the stranded yacht. Just as they pulled away from the side a shout on deck caused them to look up. Lovering was standing near the conning tower, pointing toward the *Marie's* boat.

"They have turned toward the beach," he said, excitedly waving his hand.

"They can never land in that surf."

"Come back, ye blamed fools!" roared Captain Breeze, from near the bow. But, with the exception of a derisive shout, they paid no heed, and swept steadily on to where

a mass of foaming white-capped waves could be seen beating with sullen force on the shore.

"What will we do?" asked Mr. Goodrich, following the boat's progress with rapt attention.

"Let them go," replied Jack, setting his teeth, and quietly directing the yawl's crew to row on. "Their blood be on their own heads. If they are drowned, it will be a fitting fate. Anyway, we could not stop them now."

After getting clear of the side he ordered the men to rest on their oars, and, together with the old gentleman, watched the fleeing mutineers with intense interest. The latter evidently thought they were choosing the lesser evil. Certain punishment awaited them if captured, and by attempting to pass the surf they had some chance of escaping. They were now desperate enough to run any risk. The yacht aground, their pursuers close at hand, and an Argentine government officer in command, betokened hopeless ruin to their plans.

As they approached the beach the deep booming of the breakers must have frightened them, because they were seen to bring the bow around as if trying to pull away, but it was too late. Caught in the grasp of a merciless undertow, they were swept with resistless force into the midst of the boiling waters, and capsized.

For a moment several struggling forms could be distinguished on the crest of a gigantic wave, then they, too, disappeared, swallowed up by the remorseless sea.

Lovering, from his position on the torpedo boat, watched patiently with a pair of powerful binocles to see if any one had escaped, but could discern nothing, except

a dark object lying on the sand close to the edge of the surface. As it did not move he at last concluded it was only a piece of driftwood, and turned away.

Filled with horror at the tragic scene, Jack and Mr. Goodrich resumed their trip to the yacht. It did not take them long to scramble on deck, and, rushing aft, they quickly descended to the saloon.

"Marie, Marie! are you here?" called out the old gentleman, anxiously.

A glad cry sounded from forward, and the two girls, followed by Sam and the cook, came running toward them. Not far behind was the Newfoundland dog, Shag, who, leaping on the middy, almost bore him to the deck. Marie threw herself into her father's arms, and sobbed with joy, while Manchita stood close by, half-crying and half-laughing in her excitement.

The exuberance of the two negroes caused them to dance back and forth on the soft, carpeted floor, uttering fervent expressions of thankfulness, which, under other circumstances, would have been highly ludicrous. After several minutes of mutual explanation, Jack went on deck to signal the torpedo boat, leaving Mr. Goodrich in the saloon. Taking a handkerchief, he commenced "wig-wagging" to Lovering, but before he had transmitted two words, the old gentleman rushed after him, and, in a voice filled with excitement, exclaimed:

"It is gone! The mutineers have stolen our plans of the treasure cavern!"

CHAPTER XIX.

FLOATING THE YACHT.

When Mr. Goodrich made the startling announcement that their plans showing the route to the treasure cavern had been stolen by the mutineers, Jack looked at him curiously for a moment, and then smiled.

Thinking he had not been understood, the old gentleman repeated his words with greater emphasis, but the middy actually laughed, and, with a quizzical glance at the other's bewildered face, drew forth a small leathern pouch from around his neck.

"It is not such a great calamity, after all, sir," he chuckled, taking some folded papers from the bag and spreading them out. "Here is a true copy of both the document and the map. I took the precaution of stowing these on my person before leaving Buenos Ayres."

"Well, I declare!" was all Mr. Goodrich could say at first, then, taking the papers, he looked carefully over them, and added:

"My boy, you have more sense than the rest of us. Your forethought has made the expedition possible again, for we could never have attempted it without this guide. I will have a copy drawn up for each of us this very day; and then we will be sure of one, no matter what happens."

"How did you discover the loss?"

"I went into my room, after you left the cabin, to see what damage was done there, and the first thing I noticed on passing the door, was my escritoire upset, and contents scattered around the floor. My first thought was of the plans, and, on searching for them, I found both gone."

"Was anything else missing?" continued the middy, reflectively.

"No; that is the strangest part of it. I had some money in one of the drawers, but it was not touched. It looks very much as if Lopez, or whoever it was, had known of the existence of the plans; but that is hardly possible."

"I don't know," slowly replied Jack. "There is some mystery about that man which has bothered me ever since I met him. You remember how Lovering thought he recognized him the day he shipped? Well, I have fancied several times I caught a resemblance to a person seen under peculiar circumstances. It seems awfully absurd, but——"

"Mr. Goodrich, oh! Mr. Goodrich; how glad I am to see you on board once more!" called out a voice behind them, and, on turning quickly, they saw a begrimed face thrust through the engine-room hatch. It was Adams, the assistant engineer.

He came out on deck, and, hurrying aft, began an incoherent explanation of his presence. At first the owner was seriously inclined to think the man had really been in league with the mutineers, but a moment's consideration

dispelled his doubts. His previous character and faithfulness, together with his present actions, indicated that he had assisted Lopez only under great pressure.

"Where are your men?" asked Jack.

"All gone, sir. They went with the mutineers, being afraid you would think they were guilty, also."

"And Ben Brett; he couldn't have left also?"

"I heard one of them say—the man who was stationed to guard me—that the old sailor and another deck hand were in the forecastle, bound hand and foot."

Uttering an exclamation of sympathy, the middy ran forward, and soon released them. After rubbing the stiffness out of their limbs, they returned with him to the quarter-deck, where Mr. Goodrich greeted them with pleasant words.

Dawson's face wore an expression of deep remorse. He felt that his own carelessness had caused the whole trouble, and the honest lad was just going to explain his unfortunate connection with the mutiny when the little yawl, which had returned to the torpedo boat, arrived alongside, bearing Lovering, Captain Breeze, and the young lieutenant.

The sigh of satisfaction which came from the skipper's breast as he stepped on deck, sounded like a passing wind through tautened cordage. He removed his hat, and, stalking up to Brett, regarded him fixedly. The old sailor hung his head in evident humiliation.

"He is not to blame, Breeze," interrupted Mr. Goodrich, kindly placing his hand on Ben's shoulder. "Those

scoundrels knocked him down and stowed him away in the forecastle like a piece of old junk."

"Glad to hear it happened that way," gruffly replied the captain. Then he asked, anxiously: "But ain't none o' the men on board?"

On being told that all had left in the quarter-boat, he looked mightily disappointed, and disappeared into his room.

"Now that we are once more on board the *Marie,* thanks to your friendly assistance," said the old gentleman, turning to the lieutenant, "I presume the first thing in order is to see what damage she has received. Jack, will you call Captain Breeze?"

"Certainly, sir," replied the middy, leaving the group. In a few minutes he had returned with the skipper, having notified him of the owner's wishes.

After some further conversation on the subject, preparations were made for sounding the depth of the water on the shoal. The yacht was very short-handed now, only two men—Brett and Dawson—being left besides the skipper. This trouble was obviated, however, by the lieutenant offering to loan them several firemen in case they worked the vessel afloat.

In obedience to an order from the skipper, Ben sounded the well, a precaution necessary in ascertaining whether she had started a plate. He found only four inches, the average quantity, and proof positive that the hull was still water-tight.

The old sailor then took a small hand lead, and carefully sounded on both sides and astern. He reported a

varying depth of from seven to ten feet, running from the bow. The tallow in the heel of the lead showed a sandy bottom, just what they had expected. The greater depth aft indicated a shelving bottom, and the prospect did not seem so hopeless.

Captain Breeze, although uncouth in many ways, was a thorough seaman for all that, and he went about the task of floating her with a systematic energy which inspired confidence in the rest. It was decided to try and work her off with the engines first, and, if that failed, to use the kedge anchors, a slow and laborious task.

Ben and Dawson were sent in the fireroom, with instructions to get up a full head of steam, and remain there until the relief came from the torpedo boat. Jack took the wheel, while the skipper conned the yacht from the bridge.

It did not take long to get the engines ready for turning over, as enough time had not elapsed since she ran aground for the fires to die out. Presently Adams, pleased at the change in his superior officers, called cheerfully up the tube that he was ready.

Lovering had been instructed to hold the lead line over the side to tell the instant she moved. All was ready at last, and with a firm hand Captain Breeze turned the indicator to "astern, full speed." With a whir of machinery the powerful engines responded to the call, and from the counter came the churning of the propeller, beating the water.

The first result was a muddy discoloration of the sea,

and a slight shaking of the hull. Then she commenced to sag astern, but very slightly.

"Whoop her up, down there!" shouted the excited skipper to Adams. "She's movin'! she's movin'!"

A faint "Aye, aye, sir," came back, and the *Marie* literally quivered from stem to stern under the impetus of the rapidly revolving wheel.

Inch by inch she slipped away from the tenacious clutch of the shoal, until at last, with a force that almost buried the stern under the water, she floated off in safety.

A wild "Hurrah!" came from the torpedo boat, which was echoed with a vim from those on board. Then the young lieutenant departed for his own vessel, promising to send over three or four men to assist them in returning to Bahia Blanca.

It was the opinion of all that the yacht had been very fortunate in escaping serious damage. An inexperienced navigator like the Spaniard could have easily wrecked her in a far more dangerous spot. In the course of an hour the volunteers from the torpedo boat came on board, with a message from her commander, stating that he would convoy them into port. Everything being in readiness, they started on the return trip, and reached the old anchorage without further mishap, shortly after dark.

CHAPTER XX.

JACK SURPRISES THEM.

That evening after dinner Mr. Goodrich, Lovering, and Jack adjourned to the skipper's room for a quiet chat. Owing to the worry and fatigue of the day, Marie and Manchita had retired early, completely exhausted. It had been an ordeal for them, and crowded in the past twelve hours were more thrilling incidents than the former had experienced in her previous existence.

The chief engineer, Mr. Watts, had boarded the yacht immediately after she came to anchor, and, hardly waiting to hear an account of the day's events from his assistant, began a rigid inspection of the engines. He found that certain repairs were absolutely necessary, and also advised the old gentleman to fill the coal bunkers before leaving Bahia Blanca. After a little figuring, he announced that it would require at least ten days to do this, a piece of information particularly unpleasant to all. However, there was no way out of it, so they settled down as contentedly as possible.

It was decided that the skipper should go on shore the following morning, and try to secure a crew. Three firemen and four deck hands were needed to replace the mutineers, but it was considered a comparatively easy task to obtain them in the port. Breeze was given *carte*

blanche this time, with instructions to go by rail to Buenos Ayres, if necessary. It ultimately transpired that he secured the crew of a condemned British steamer, seven good, steady men, who grasped the opportunity of shipping on the *Marie* with avidity. However, that is slightly ahead of the story.

The evening of their arrival, they were all assembled in the skipper's room, as stated before. Jack seemed strangely preoccupied, and had been rallied by Lovering several times on that account. He parried the other's questions with a joke, and seemed adverse to stating the reason for his thoughtful mood, until at last, attracting the attention of Mr. Goodrich and the captain from a casual conversation, he announced that he had something important to say, which concerned their present voyage.

Breeze had long before been fully informed by the old gentleman as to the purpose of the expedition, and he was regarded by them as one of the company, so the middy did not hesitate to speak before him.

"I have acquired a little information to-day which will probably startle you," he began, speaking slowly and with evident appreciation of his theme. "It has been suspected by one of us"—here he glanced at George—"for some time, but I think even he will be surprised. Now, allow me to ask you who has been the cause of all our trouble since leaving Buenos Ayres?"

"Why, the Spaniard, of course," replied Mr. Goodrich, looking at Gordon wonderingly.

"Exactly; and it was also he who stole the original plans of Terra del Fuego. Why do you suppose he

wanted them? I'll tell you. The circumstances of the theft indicated that he knew of their existence. Well, why not, considering that he was the original owner?"

"What!" exclaimed the old gentleman and Breeze in a breath. "The Spaniard, Juan Lopez, was really Manuel Garcia?"

"Impossible!" added Mr. Goodrich. "That man died on my house the night of the revolution."

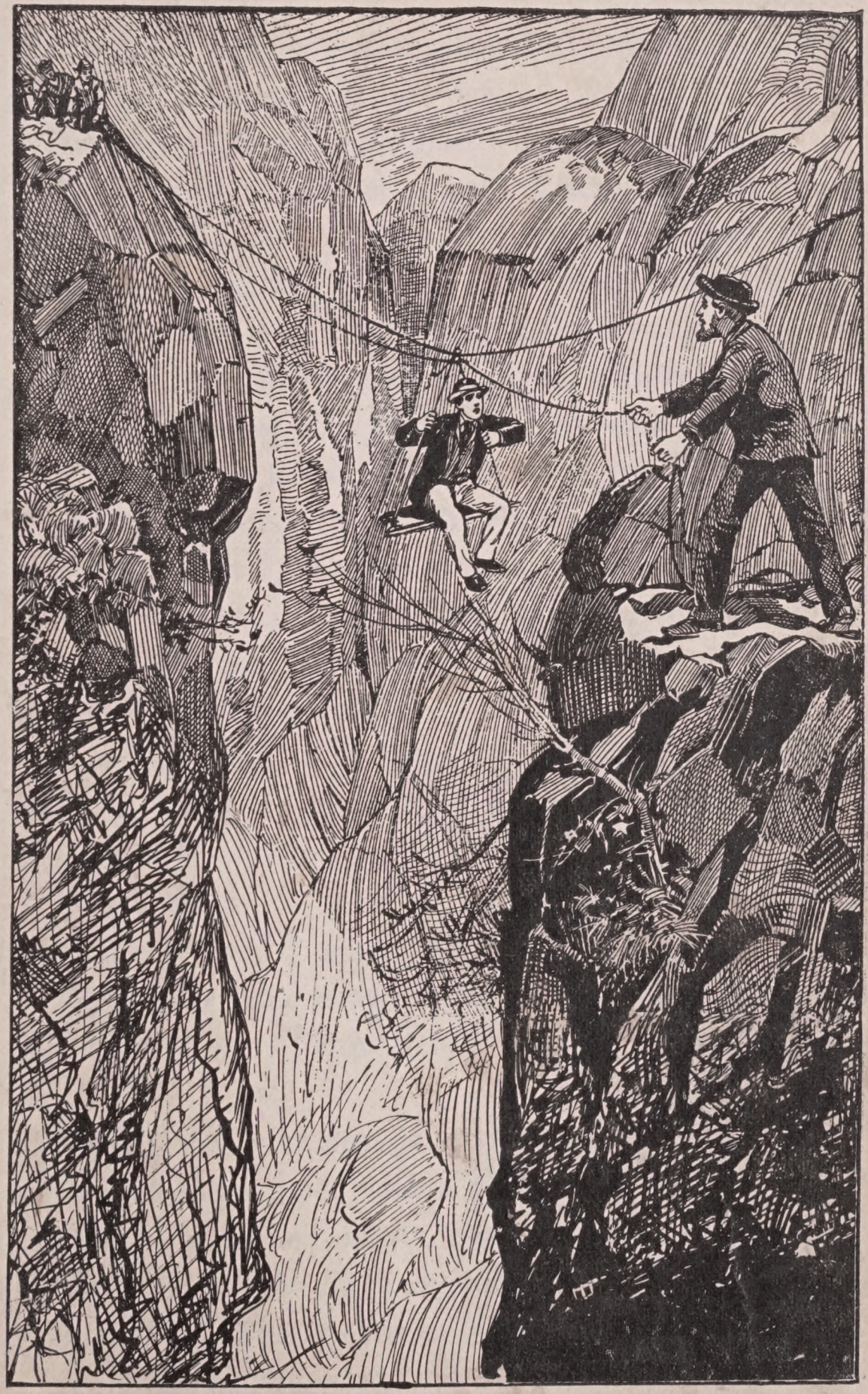
"He was supposed to have died, but that he did not is proved by the fact that he sailed with us from Buenos Ayres, and was probably lost in the surf to-day."

The young surgeon had quietly listened to Gordon's startling information until now. Arising from his chair, he approached the middy, and asked, without the slightest trace of excitement in his voice:

"Your proof, Jack; what is it?"

"Well, this is it in a nutshell: Since Mr. Goodrich told me about the disappearance of those plans I have been thinking deeply over the matter. It seemed almost impossible that Lopez and Garcia were one, but a sudden inspiration revealed a way to satisfy my doubts. I simply asked Manchita the names of the sailors killed by the so-called Lopez on her father's vessel. As I partially expected, she replied: 'John Carnow and Jim Duffy.' Now, what did we read on the back of the map? The date and place those very same men were murdered by Garcia. Do you require further proof?"

"But what about the scene on the roof?" asked Mr. Goodrich, still unconvinced. "Surely our surgeon here would be able to tell whether the man was dead or not."



"Jack was pulled across by Ben." See page 186.

This was not said in sarcasm, but really meant by the old gentleman in support of his views.

Thus drawn into the argument, Lovering replied:

"Not always, sir. Every doctor is liable to make a mistake in such a case. There are certain syncopes which will deceive one in daylight. And remember, this took place on a dark night, with only a small hand-lantern to see by. The excitement of the hour, with other attending circumstances, also rendered it posssible. No, I believe, in fact, I know, that Jack is right. I thought I recognized the man the day he shipped, but it seemed so improbable that I was convinced against my will."

"The feller must have been lugged away by one of his soger mates, and taken to a hospital, eh?" said Captain Breeze, deeply interested.

"No doubt that was the way," replied Jack. "Then after he recovered he shipped on board the yacht with some of his confederates."

"Why didn't he come to us boldly and demand his rightful property?" asked Mr. Goodrich.

"Well, that is the strangest part of it," answered Lovering, reflectively. "However, it will all come out some day."

"How's that? the man is as dead as Davy Jones now," exclaimed the skipper with a quiet chuckle.

George remained silent, but an expression of deep thought came over his face, and he walked toward the open door as if he wished to retire.

As it was growing late, the other two followed his example, leaving Captain Breeze to arrange the anchor

watches for the night. As he only had two men he decided to remain up until midnight himself. On the majority of vessels it is customary to have the crew stand watch one at a time while at anchcor, in case anything should occur, but the necessity was not so apparent in a protected port like Bahia Blanca. The skipper was nothing if not systematic, however, so he carried out the regular routine.

Next morning all hands were up bright and early, notwithstanding the fatigues of the previous day. Captain Breeze went ashore shortly after sunrise to look up his crew, and returned before noon with the seven men mentioned before. Mr. Goodrich reviewed them on deck, and seemed favorably impressed by their appearance. They proved a hardy set, looking as if well suited to the rough work of a sailor's life, and were duly shipped.

By direction of the old gentleman, Jack made them a short speech, relating the circumstances of the mutiny and its results. After this they were turned over to the skipper and Mr. Watts, who placed them to work immediately.

During the following ten days nothing occurred to delay the repairs, so one afternoon, amid the well-wishes of a host of friends made in Bahia Blanca, the yacht steamed down the river once more, but this time in charge of her rightful crew. From then until the fourth day out the voyage was unbroken by incidents worth mentioning. Sandy Point, a settlement in the Straits of Magellan, had been passed the previous evening, and on this morning, just as the grayish light heralding the coming

of dawn had given way to the brighter glories of the sun, a man stationed at the masthead hailed the bridge with the welcome cry of:

"Land O!"

Both the skipper and Jack had been on deck since midnight, as the vicinity was considered dangerous cruising ground. On hearing the announcement, the middy seized a glass and climbed the fore-rigging. At first he was only able to see a dark smudge against the distant horizon, but as the sun rose higher, and the yacht's speed carried her rapidly on, the spot broadened out, and at last stood revealed, a mountain peak.

According to the map drawn by Bill Wilson, the sheltered bay named after him was to be found on the extreme eastern edge of the coast line, with the highest mountain peak bearing southwest by south while steering a southerly course. This was probably the peak.

Calling Mr. Goodrich, Captain Breeze notified him of his intention of running slowly in toward land, using the lead as a precaution against shoals. This he did until bottom was reached at eight fathoms, then, skirting the coast, which had become plainly visible, he at last announced that they were undoubtedly abreast of the bay.

CHAPTER XXI.

BILL WILSON'S BAY.

The report that land had been sighted brought everybody on deck. Even Marie and Manchita hastily dressed and joined the group on the bridge. The morning was clear, and cold enough for heavy outer clothing. Since leaving Bahia Blanca, the temperature had steadily fallen, until now it registered thirty degrees above zero.

"I think it seldom gets lower than this in these here latitudes," said Captain Breeze, from the depths of a fathom of woolen neckerchief. "I hev seen it freeze spray as it was a-flying over the deck, but that was away to the southward, beyond the cape."

"It seems so peculiar to have the dead of winter in July," exclaimed Marie to Jack. "Just to think of our friends up north, going to seaside resorts for surf bathing this very month, while we are shivering under wraps."

"Well, I hardly believe I envy them," replied the middy, with a smile. "I think it is much easier to keep warm in cold weather than to keep cool in warm weather, don't you?"

"But which brings the most comfort," persisted Marie, roguishly, "a cool breeze on a warm day or a warm breeze on a cool day?"

"Did you speak, ma'am?" interrupted the skipper, thinking he had heard his name mentioned.

"Yes, captain," laughed Jack; "Miss Goodrich wishes to know whether you would prefer being a cool 'breeze' on a warm day, or a warm 'breeze' on a cold day?"

The old sailor indulged in a quiet chuckle, which caused his weather-beaten face to contort in a most wonderful manner.

"Wal, a leetle of both would about suit me, ma'am," he answered, with a wink at the middy. "Howsomever, I ain't particular; I generally takes it as it comes."

During this by-play the yacht had headed in toward the land. Directly in front of them could be seen an indentation in the coast, with a bold, rugged headland at the northern point. It appeared to be a roomy and well-sheltered spot, protected against the sweep of the sea by an exposed reef running out some hundreds of yards from the shore. A sandy beach, gleaming in the sun's rays, stretched along the inner edge, and back of that was a long, low plain, extending to where, in the distance, loomed a mountain peak, just faintly visible.

A series of white patches scattered here and there on its sides, and brought into prominent relief by somber masses of rock, indicated the presence of eternal snow. It was apparently an extinct volcano, emptied of its subterranean fires, and remaining a solitary sentinel amid the desolate regions of the south.

"Not a very inviting exterior to our treasure chamber," whispered Lovering to the middy, as they stood watching the panorama unfolding before them.

"The rougher the husk the sweeter the kernel," quoted Jack, in reply. "Now, if we had to stay down here and

spend our gold—when we get it—it would be a different story."

"That is very true, old boy; but you must not forget that in an expedition of this kind we might stay much longer than we expect, or care to."

"Now, don't croak; that isn't like you, George," hastily replied Jack, looking at his friend in surprise. But the merry twinkle in Lovering's eye reassured him, and he turned away with a laugh.

The *Marie* edged her way in very cautiously. The lead was kept going on both sides, and at one time, finding the water shoaling more rapidly than was desired, Captain Breeze lowered a new cutter they had secured in Bahia Blanca, and sent it on ahead to feel the way.

"It don't look very pleasant," said the skipper, gruffly, but casting an approving glance at the almost land-locked interior as they passed the reef, he continued: "It's an almighty snug harbor, anyway, an' a ship could rot here without being disturbed."

Rounding to within a stone's throw of the beach, both anchors were let go, and preparations made for a lengthy stay. The short topmasts were housed, awnings furled for stowing below, and everything needed to render the yacht shipshape attended to by the experienced old sailor before nightfall.

It had been decided to start inland on the following day, several hours being considered sufficient in which to prepare for the expedition, as all details had been arranged beforehand. Captain Breeze was to stay behind in charge of the yacht, with all the crew except Ben Brett

and Sam Sorreltop, who were to accompany the cavalcade as general assistant and servant, respectively. They, with Mr. Goodrich, Jack and Lovering, would make five all told.

At first the old gentleman thought it would be better to take four of the sailors, but he finally yielded to the advice of the young officers, who said that the fewer the number the less time would be wasted in travel.

That evening after dinner Mr. Goodrich called a consultation in his room to again talk over the explanation on the rude map drawn by Bill Wilson.

"It is best to be thoroughly familiar with every detail before starting out," he commenced, spreading the copy Jack had so fortunately made, on his desk. "Now, according to this it is about a four days' journey on foot to the mountains. I presume that means seventy-five or eighty miles?"

"About that," replied Lovering, reflectively. "We ought to travel twenty miles a day at least—that is, if the country permits."

"Well, if we are successful in our search," put in Jack, laughingly, "it will take us considerably longer to go than to return. We won't have as much food to carry back, but I hope we will secure gold enough to make respectable burdens for all of us."

"Now, although this map is rudely sketched, yet it appears to be correct so far," continued the old gentleman, glancing at the others over his eyeglasses. "We have found this bay as he directed, and there is the mountain peak in plain view. The dotted line undoubtedly

represents their route to the beach after escaping from the crater. It runs pretty straight from about midway between the high land and the bay, but nearer the mountains it must, from the zigzag course, pass along ravines and crevices."

"The spot he has marked with a cross evidently indicates the pit they fell into?" said Lovering, interrogatively.

"Yes; that is the place he says can only be crossed by a ten-fathom rope. We have that among the stores, haven't we, Jack?"

"I saw it packed myself," replied the middy. "It is a two-inch manilla, strong enough to support an ox. There is also a light boatswain's chair and a smaller rope to be used with it."

"What I understand by his remarks on the map," resumed Mr. Goodrich, thrumming on the desk with a pair of compasses, "is that by crossing this gulch we can go directly to the crater without encountering the 'funny people' he mentions."

"It is hard to say," ventured Jack, doubtfully. "He is rather vague there. Probably he means it is easier to reach there by crossing than the way they took, through all the caverns. I think we run a risk of encountering these natives near their treasure as well as elsewhere."

"Probably more so," quietly added George.

"Well, if we meet them it cannot be helped," said the old gentleman. "I think that, with our modern weapons, we five can render a good account with almost any number."

"It is a pity the rest of that letter was lost!" exclaimed Gordon, regretfully. "It would have been all plain sailing, instead of this groping around in the dark. That map does not tell how we will recognize the crater when we arrive there. All it says is to follow a narrow tunnel in the mountain side, to be found two miles beyond the black pit."

"I take it he means the crater is at the very end of this rock passage," suggested Mr. Goodrich. "Well, boys, we will know before long, anyway. Now, I think it is about time to retire. We must be up bright and early tomorrow for a hard day's work."

Next morning the yacht presented a scene of bustle and activity long before the sun showed his wintry face over the eastern horizon. William, the cook, had a steaming hot breakfast prepared for all hands by four o'clock, and, after eating, the men were set to work loading the quarter-boat with stores for the expedition."

This occupied the time until daylight, when, just as soon as it was possible to see, several men went ashore with the boat, and unloaded the cargo on the beach, near where a narrow river flowed into the bay. It only required one trip, as just the few articles necessary for absolute use were taken. The long ropes formed the most weighty item, but they had been divided into five portions, compactly arranged.

Each man carried a knapsack, especially made in Buenos Ayres after plans drawn by Lovering. They were snugly packed with canned food and other minor

articles, and were constructed to rest easily on the shoulders.

The expedition was to start from the yacht at nine o'clock, landing in the light skiff. Shortly after the time arrived, however, an important discovery was made which portended serious trouble to the expedition at the outset.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNWELCOME DISCOVERY.

The way the discovery mentioned in the last chapter came to be made was this: Those men dispatched on shore with the stores were ordered to remain there and assist the expedition in starting, and on no account to leave the articles unguarded.

Shortly before nine Captain Breeze chanced to glance toward the beach, and, to his great surprise, saw one of the men jump into the boat and scull rapidly in the direction of the yacht.

Where they had landed was a little inlet or cove surrounded by short, wiry bushes, and near the mouth of what seemed a narrow stream flowing into the bay. The spot had been selected because of its shelving beach and nearness to the yacht.

The skipper watched the oncoming boat with anxiety. He knew that his imperative orders would not be disobeyed without good cause, and that something extraordinary must have occurred. Sending a man below to call Mr. Goodrich and the others, he stood by the gangway ladder and waited. He was joined almost immediately by the old gentleman and Gordon, who had responded in haste to his summons.

"What is the matter, Breeze?" asked the former.

"Something has happened on shore, commodore, or else that there boat wouldn't be a-coming off," replied the skipper, pointing to the light craft. "See! he's waving his hand at us now."

The oarsman had paused a moment to make some indistinguishable signal; then, grasping the ashen blade once more, he was soon alongside. Not stopping to climb on board, he called out excitedly:

"Come ashore, sir. Quick! Me and Jim have found a sailboat in that creek yonder, an' it looks as if it has only been there a couple of days."

"Great gales! ye don't say so!" exclaimed the captain, glancing at Mr. Goodrich in astonishment. "What kind of a craft is it, Shannon?"

"It looks like one of them rough-built fishing smacks seen around Sandy Point, an' seems to be about ten tons burden. The mast has been unstepped an' stowed in the bushes close by, but the sails are gone."

Just then Lovering came up, and, on being informed of the discovery, recommended that the party should go ashore and look at the boat. His suggestion was acted upon at once. Jumping into the cutter, they were rowed to the beach.

The sailor left with the stores met them at the landing, and reported that he had heard a dog barking up the river. This new information did not tend to reassure them, and it was deemed advisable to take a couple of guns as an added protection.

"The aborigines inhabiting this part of the island are not such treacherous savages as those found further to

the south," explained Mr. Goodrich, as they walked in the direction of the river bank. "But it is best to trust them as little as possible. I am sorry we are compelled to meet them this early in our trip."

"From what I have read of the race," said Jack, "we need not expect to encounter very many at a time. They do not live in tribes or communities, but each family remains apart from the others, and only combine in small groups against some common enemy."

"Our danger will not come from them," added Lovering, gravely. "This boat we are going to see means more to us than all the Yaghans, or whatever you call them, in Terra del Fuego."

"What do you think about it, George?" asked the middy, curiously, eying his friend in a peculiar manner as he spoke.

"Can't say," was the laconic answer; then, evidently changing his mind, he added: "But it undoubtedly indicates the presence of civilized persons, and what would they be doing here if not on a similar errand to ours."

"By Jove! I hope not!" exclaimed Jack, fervently.

"That can hardly be, Lovering," declared the old gentleman, decisively. "All those who knew of the crater's existence are dead."

The young surgeon did not reply, but tramped on through the grass as if he still had the courage of his convictions. George was a remarkably shrewd youth for his age, and one who believed firmly in the old adage that "silence is golden" until the time arrives to speak.

After going a short distance beyond the river's mouth, the sailor in the lead signified that they were almost there.

Stepping cautiously, the party rounded a large clump of stunted trees, and saw the object of their search. It was hauled partially out of the water, and, as Shannon had described it, seemed to be a fishing smack built after a pattern in use on the Argentine coast. It appeared to be about twenty-five feet long, and probably eight wide. The stern was housed over in the form of a rude cabin, but from there forward, the hull was uncovered. Seats and rowlocks indicated that oars formed the motive power at times. A short distance away, however, the butt of a pine mast protruded from an evergreen thicket, where it had been stowed after unstepping.

"This mark in the sand proves that it has not been here over three or four days," remarked one of the men, pointing to a trail made by dragging the mast to the bushes.

"You are right," coincided the middy, stooping over and examining the furrow closely. "It could not have been longer than that at the most."

"What on 'arth did the lubbers try and hide the stick for, anyhow?" growled the skipper, disgustedly. "They've took the sails, an' you can't do anything with a bare pole."

"Shannon, you and Wilkins keep watch while we examine her," ordered Mr. Goodrich. "If you hear any peculiar noise, or that dog barking again, let us know at once."

It was an easy matter to scramble over the side of the

craft, as she only stood a few feet above the sand. The entire party, with the exception of the two sailors, were speedily on the after-deck, curious to see what the cabin contained. Jack entered the little room first. It was only about nine feet long, and unlighted, save by a circular hole cut in the roof, which had probably contained a stovepipe at some previous period.

The only signs of furniture were a rude bunk on each side of the door, and a few rusty pans scattered about the deck. The place was foul and ill ventilated, and every one was satisfied with a cursory glance, except Gordon, who, before leaving the interior, poked under the bunks and made a general search for anything which would possibly prove the identity of the crew. The only article he found was a ragged shoe, evidently of European manufacture, which had been recently worn. Joining the others, he told them of his non-success.

"There is absolutely nothing in there except this," he said, holding up the article; "but it is rather significant in dispelling any doubts as to the nationality of the visitors to our treasure island."

"This is a very serious discovery," exclaimed Mr. Goodrich, gravely. "The finding of this boat means the presence of others besides ourselves, and why they should come to such a desolate, out-of-the-way place, is the suspicious part of it."

"Probably on the same errand," quietly put in George, for the second time.

The old gentleman gave him a troubled glance, and replied:

"If that is the case, where did they discover the existence of the gold? The only person who knew of it was this man Garcia, and he was drowned before our eyes."

"I have certainly thought so all along, but finding this boat to-day reminds me that after the mutineers were capsized in the surf. I saw a dark object lying on the beach, which may have been one of them. I watched it through the glass, but it did not move while we were there; still, whoever it was might have recovered later on. That Spaniard is like a cat, and has the proverbial nine lives, I believe."

"If we were positive of that, I would advise abandoning the expedition," said the old gentleman. "He has a prior claim, no matter how much of a scoundrel he may be. He was one of the original discoverers, and is therefore more entitled to it than we are."

"But we are not positive, sir," expostulated the middy. "This is only conjecture, and the persons who came in this boat may be naturalists searching for new specimens, or a party of explorers."

"I wouldn't advise doing that, sir," added Lovering. "I think it would be folly to give up the treasure without further proof that Garcia is alive."

"Even if the blamed shark is above water, he don't desarve anything, nohow," chimed in Captain Breeze, who had been listening impatiently until now. "I don't calc'late a land-lubber like him has any rights at all. Didn't he kill his mates, an' hasn't he tried to run away with the *Marie?* Then you talk about his claims—huh!"

"Well, I suppose the majority rules," consented Mr.

Goodrich, finally. "We will continue, but I reserve the right to re-open the question if any trace is discovered of Garcia."

"Now, this brings up another question," said Jack, vastly relieved at the decision. "If the Spaniard is on the island, he must have a gang with him, as he could not have sailed the craft alone. If such is the case, it will be advisable to take more men with us."

"I do not like to do that," replied Mr. Goodrich, anxiously. "It is best to have as large a force as possible on the yacht. If this should happen to be Garcia, he might come back to the coast and cause trouble."

"Why not tow this boat out into the bay, and anchor her alongside the *Marie?*" suggested the middy, suddenly. "Then, if the crew returns, they will have to swim, and I don't think many of them will fancy the water at this time of year. If they are friends, it will be an easy matter to give the craft back to them with appropriate explanations."

This was considered a good idea, and met with the approval of all. It was decided to carry out the project at once, so Captain Breeze sent one of the sailors to the yacht for more men. While waiting for them, Lovering proposed to ascend the river bank for a couple of miles to see if any further signs could be discovered. Leaving the skipper and the other seaman in charge of the stores, they set out through the woods at a cautious walk, keeping a careful watch on both sides. There was no trace of a path, but by skirting the creek, advantage could be taken of comparatively level ground. The forest of evergreen,

beech and winter bark trees was not very extensive, and the greater part of the island appeared to be bare of foliage.

After walking a long distance without finding anything of an alarming nature, they returned to the camp, rather relieved in mind.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MIDNIGHT ALARM.

They found Captain Breeze actively superintending the launching of the boat. Two more men had landed from the *Marie*, making five with the skipper, so they had an easy task getting the light smack into the water. The quarter boat from the yacht had been brought up the little river abreast of the place, and with two seamen in her, was in readiness to take the other in tow.

Placing his brawny shoulders against the bow, the captain gave the word, and with a "one, two, three" they shoved the lumbering craft off the bank.

The men in the quarter boat skillfully cast a line over the stempost and all were in readiness.

"Tow her out near the yacht, Shannon," the skipper sung out. "Anchor her hard an' fast; make sure o' that."

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the answer, and before many minutes the craft was well on its way to its new position.

"A good job well done," exclaimed Breeze, sententiously. "Now, if those lobscouse-eatin' sharks, whoever they are, wants to board the *Marie* uninvited, they will have to swim. Be you goin' to start to-day, commodore?"

"I hardly know whether to commence our trip at once or not," replied Mr. Goodrich, undecided. "This last in-

cident has made me rather uneasy. Although I know you are perfectly capable of watching over Marie and Manchita, yet I hardly like to leave them while strangers are on the island."

"Well, if they ever succeed in boardin' the yacht, they'll crawl over the corpse of William Breeze, A. B. You kin go an' take two more men, commodore, an' be perfectly at ease in your mind."

"We had better return to the yacht and talk it over," finally said Mr. Goodrich. "Have your men move those stores down to the beach, where we can see them, and leave three on guard with loaded rifles. If we start, it will not before early to-morrow morning, anyway."

The quarter boat having returned by this time, all except those detailed embarked in her and pulled out to the *Marie*. After luncheon, the old gentleman, who had remained closeted in his private room for an hour, sent for the young officers. Bidding them be seated, he walked slowly up and down for several minutes before speaking.

"Now, boys," he said at last; "this expedition may be fraught with danger, as we don't know who these newcomers are. But I am not worried about myself, as you know very well. It is the girls. I have been thinking it over this morning and have arrived at the conclusion that even if we do take more men, there will be sufficient left on board to defend the yacht ably. Besides Captain Breeze, who is a host in himself, there are Watts, Adams, William the cook, and four firemen, eight all told. With the vessel as a citadel, I think they can manage to hold their own."

"Yes, against treble their number," agreed Jack. "And another thing, you mustn't forget that the *Marie* can always steam to sea in an emergency."

"Have you given Captain Breeze any instructions in case we do not return by the time decided upon?" asked George.

"I have a written statement here," replied the old gentleman, taking an envelope from a pigeonhole in his desk, "which gives my wishes in the matter. It tells him just how to act if we are not on board by the fifth day of next month. It is now the middle of July, so that will give us ample time. He is to leave a letter buried in a tin box under a certain bush near the beach, to be selected before we start, and steam without loss of time to Sandy Point. After securing ten or twelve more men there, and a friend of mine employed by a coal company, he is to return forthwith and dispatch another, or relief expedition after us. I have also inclosed a copy of the map and directions. That covers about everything, I believe. Now that we are to continue the trip, I think it will be advisable to be fully prepared for a start at daybreak to-morrow. Jack, you can select two more men from the crew, and continue your preparations. You will please excuse me for the present, boys, as I wish to have a talk with Marie."

The young officers left the cabin and went about their various duties. Lovering added a few medicines to his case, in view of the addition to their party, while Jack conferred with the skipper about matters in general. Shortly before sunset the middy went ashore, taking two additional guards and a small tent. He thought it best

to remain with the men, in view of a possible attack. Although nothing further had been heard of the strangers, still there was a probability they might be lurking in the neighborhood.

The stores had been placed a short distance from the mouth of the river, on a slight elevation clear of shrubbery, and in plain view from the yacht. At nightfall, Jack ordered a huge fire made of dry pieces of wood collected in the vicinity, and stationed two men, armed with Winchesters, near by. He divided his little force into two watches of two men each; one standing guard until midnight, and the other from that time until sunrise. The tent was pitched within half-a-dozen yards of the fire, and directly alongside of the stores. In it had been placed a couple of cots with sufficient bedding for protection against the cold. After seeing the men placed properly, Jack retired, leaving instructions to call him at the slightest signs of unwelcome visitors.

There was no moon, but a myriad of stars dotted the heavens with gleaming points of light, rendering objects distinguishable some distance away. Almost overhead glittered the four beautiful planets forming the Southern Cross, that emblem famous in all climes; and old Ben, one of the first guards, paused now and again in his steady tramp around the camp to glance upward in admiration.

Out in the bay the *Marie* rode quietly at anchor, plainly visible from the beach. Her black hull casting a smudge against the darker background of the sea, and with her graceful lines and delicate tracery of rigging, seeming only a ghostly visitant to that inhospitable coast.

It was cold, and a biting wind that had sprung up from the southward whistled through the stunted bushes and knocked unceasingly at the closed tent flaps with a gradually increasing force. Suddenly, from the direction of the river, came the faint barking of a dog, causing Brett to halt and grasp his rifle with a firmer hold.

The old sailor peered uneasily from side to side, then slipping over to his mate, who had unwittingly dozed off, woke him up with an impatient touch.

"Rise out o' there, Shannon; something's wrong. D'ye hear that noise?"

The sleepy sailor jumped to his feet in alarm, then, seeing Brett bending over him, asked what was the matter in a voice rendered hoarse by the night air. Ben repeated his words.

Just then a slight rustling of the bushes near the tent was heard by both, and they caught sight of a grotesque face peering at them through the foliage. Without a moment's hesitation, Brett raised his rifle and pulled the trigger.

The sharp report was immediately followed by a cry of agony, and a dark figure fell from the bush into the circle of light. It lay writhing on the ground, and moaned pitifully until Jack, who had hastily left his tent at the sound of the shot, approached to see who it was.

One glance at the animal-like countenance, with its low brows and loose, wrinkled skin, showed that it was one of the Yaghans, or Fuegan natives. The coarse, unkempt hair, and black, restless eyes, very wide apart; the head and chest disproportionately large, compared with the ex-

tremely slender limbs, could not be mistaken, and he ordered the wounded creature carried closer to the fire.

A slight examination showed that Ben's shot had merely pierced the fleshy portion of the right arm, and although painful, it was not necessarily fatal. The middy felt vastly relieved on finding that it was not one of the suspected crew.

He knew that his captive was comparatively harmless, and all they had to fear from his people would be thievery. A faint hail from the yacht interrupted his examination. It was Captain Breeze asking the cause of the disturbance. Several lights twinkling from various parts of the *Marie's* deck indicated that they had taken the alarm. Bidding Brett watch the Yaghan, Jack jumped into the light skiff and sculled off to the vessel. After a moment's explanation, Lovering accompanied him ashore with a case of instruments, and set about bandaging the wound.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE MARCH.

"What rum-looking customers these natives are," said Lovering to Jack, pausing in his work to glance at the Yaghan's face. "They represent almost the lowest order of humanity, and are considered nearly incapable of being civilized."

"They are not beauties, that's certain," replied the middy, gazing contemplatively at the subject of their criticism; then turning quickly to the young surgeon, he added: "I say, George; I wonder if the fellow knows any Spanish. He may be able to give us some information about that other party."

Without waiting for an answer, he bent over the wounded man and asked, slowly and distinctly:

"Se habla Espanol? (Do you speak Spanish?)"

The native's countenance brightened slightly, but he did not reply. Jack repeated his question. This time the Yaghan muttered a few words, partly Spanish and partly a native dialect, which the middy interpreted to mean that he understood him.

He seemed to be still suffering from his wound, but the expression of terror, caused by his capture, was gone. They had placed him on a pile of blankets near the fire, where the genial warmth made him comfortable, and, al-

though closely guarded, still he could plainly see he was in no danger.

Jack persisted in his attempt to make him talk, and finally managed to ascertain that he had seen the men on the previous day. It required great patience to extract from the mass of Yaghan patois the few Spanish sentences he knew, but at last the middy pieced together the following information:

His name was, as near as Gordon could spell it, Waroka. He resided, when at home, near the mountains, but had gone away several days previous, to hunt guanacos. While hiding behind a huge rock the morning before, he had seen a party of *"kolpei"* (white men), traveling toward the highlands. He naively confessed being so frightened that he did not stop to count them, but there were more than this (holding up five fingers).

On being asked whether they carried many weapons he answered that each man had one "fire stick," and the leader a large *cuchillo* (knife). Finally, he explained that he had come to the coast to see if the other party had left anything worth stealing.

"An honest confession, by Jove!" laughed George. "He must be the Fuegan George Washington. I wonder how he picked up his Spanish?"

"Probably made several trips across the straits to Sandy Point. These people are half Patagonians, anyway. Well, we have learned something, and the labor is not wasted. There are over five men two days ahead of us. That probably means trouble, old boy, and we are not going to secure the treasure without a fight. However,

we will talk that over later. It is now twelve o'clock, and Mr. Goodrich will be ashore at half-past four, so we had better turn in for a couple of winks."

Jack explained to Waroka as well as he could that, if he remained quiet and did not try to escape, no harm would befall him. Then, after seeing the relief guard posted, he retired for the second time that night. Both he and George slept soundly until one of the men called them to say that Captain Breeze had hailed the camp. Tumbling hastily out of the cots, they left the tent and found that it was almost daylight.

Stepping down on the beach, Jack waved his hand at a figure standing on the quarter deck. The action was immediately responded to, and then he could hear the skipper's voice bidding them come on board at once. Telling Brett to keep careful watch over the prisoner, he and George rowed off to the yacht.

"The commodore is up this half hour, an' wants ye to be ready to leave as soon as ye have breakfast," said Breeze, meeting them at the gangway. "He's fixed up an' anxious to start."

"Have the young ladies left their cabin yet?" asked the middy.

"I reckon ye'll find them all prepared to say adoo," replied the skipper, smiling broadly. "Marie was up here several minutes ago, saying she wanted to see the sun rise, but I s'pose she was kinder mixed up, because she looked in the direction of the camp, which is nearly west, isn't it?"

But Jack had hurried aft, followed by Lovering, who

laughed softly to himself at his friend's glowing cheeks. On gaining the saloon they found Mr. Goodrich and the two girls evidently awaiting them. Breakfast was on the table, and after a moment's conversation, they sat down to what would probably be their last civilized meal for some weeks.

The old gentleman seemed preoccupied and did not talk much, but the young officers were in the best of spirits. Lovering appeared especially cheerful, and by his witty remarks soon dispelled the slight gloom caused by their impending departure. To his great disgust, Jack was compelled to leave before the others to attend to some final arrangements on deck.

By the time they had finished he was ready with the boat to make the last trip ashore. Seeing Sam Sorreltop and Shag, who were to accompany them, in the bow, he returned to the deck and bade Marie and Manchita good-by. It was not a very exhilarating ceremony, and all were glad when it had passed. Leaving the girls alternately waving their handkerchiefs and drying their tears, the party pulled to the beach.

Captain Breeze landed with them to receive his final instructions. The big-hearted sailor did not look overjoyed at the parting, but, by dint of much fault-finding with the crew and other flimsy pretenses, he managed to partially conceal his emotion. Shortly before starting, Jack held an interesting interview with Waroka, the Yaghan, and by the promise of innumerable tenpenny nails and other Fuegan articles of vertu, persuaded him to accompany the

expedition as guide, Lovering having stated that his arm would soon heal in that climate.

At the middy's command the men broke camp and shouldered their burdens. There were now eight all told in the party, not including the dog, and they made a rather formidable appearance when arrayed in marching order. Each man carried a Winchester in addition to his revolver, with plenty of ammunition. There were plenty of canned meats, vegetables, hard bread and coffee to last them at least three weeks, while Sam carried a varied collection of pots and tinware amply sufficient for their needs.

The bedding consisted of blankets with small army tents, to be used, if necessary. The latter article was only a square piece of light canvas, just large enough to cover one man, and weighing but little. It was supposed to be suspended over a line stretched between two trees or on sticks cut for the purpose. The rope required for crossing the chasm of the black pit had been divided into different parts, one to every man except Mr. Goodrich and the native.

After seeing everything in readiness, Jack gave the word and the expedition started on its momentous journey. They had hardly gone ten steps before the loud report of a cannon sounded, and on hastily looking back, they saw Captain Breeze waving his hat and pointing toward the yacht. A white film of smoke was curling above the forward deck, and from each masthead streamed an American flag. The faint echo of a cheer

also came to their ears, repeated several times. It was the skipper's godspeed.

Waving their hands in return, they plunged into the depths of an evergreen forest, and soon lost sight of the coast. Waroka took the lead and struck out in a south-westerly direction, closely followed by the rest.

During the first hour progress was easy, as the thinly-scattered trees offered no obstacle. But, after marching two or three miles, they emerged on one of the pampas or vast plains, stretching to where could be seen the faint outlines of their objective point—the mountains. As far as the eye could reach, not a tree was visible ahead of them, but under foot spread a rank carpet of tall, wiry grass, which clung to the legs and rendered walking difficult. However, plodding slowly along, with an occasional halt for a few minutes' rest, they at last came to the bank of a narrow stream running across their path. It was necessary to ford it, so, first ascertaining its shallow depth, the party stepped boldly in and reached the other side without mishap.

As it was nearly noon, Mr. Goodrich gave orders to prepare dinner. Now began Sam's important functions. As yet he had not displayed an overweening joy at forming one of the party, but when he saw the deep interest manifested in his skillful manipulation of the pots and kettles, he brightened visibly, and set about his task with a vigor which promised satisfactory results.

"Do you miss the fine linen of the yacht, Jack?" asked the old gentleman, with a wink at Lovering.

"Not by a jug-full," replied the middy, emphatically, from his seat on a grassy knoll. Pausing to help himself to a generous quantity of potted ham, he continued: "This suits me all over. If it wasn't for the cold, I would like to camp out all the year."

"Yes; that is the only drawback down here," said Lovering, tossing a biscuit to Shag. "It is like taking an outing in December; but if we don't have snow, we shall do well enough."

At one o'clock they resumed the march, and walked steadily until dark. Selecting a spot somewhat protected by a slight elevation of the ground, the tents were pitched in a semi-circle around a huge fire, and supper prepared. Sam brewed a pot of coffee, and warmed the canned provisions, which, together with some preserved fruits brought for the first day's trip, proved extremely palatable to the hungry men.

The party was divided into three watches of two men each, Mr. Goodrich not forming one of the detail by mutual consent. It was considered best to keep a careful lookout, in view of the fact that strangers might possibly be in the neighborhood. After all arrangements were made for the night, those not on guard retired, and the camp was soon buried in slumber.

Next morning all hands were called at daybreak, and the march resumed.

For the following three days nothing occurred worthy of note. The aspect of the country changed on approaching the mountains, the level plains breaking up into a

series of rugged bluffs and deep ravines, which the party skirted, under the successful guidance of Waroka.

On the evening of the third day, while following a narrow passage, they suddenly came upon a yawning chasm, effectually blocking farther progress. On both sides loomed immense walls of granite, up to where, far overhead, gleamed a stretch of blue sky. No foothold was possible on the polished surface; no living being could scale the imperturbable barrier placed at the gate of their goal by some titanic hand. They halted, and silently gazed into the impenetrable depths of the crevice, knowing that at last the mysterious black pit of Bill Wilson's chronicle had been reached.

It appeared to be at least fifty feet wide, and extended as far as the eye could reach in both directions. On looking down they saw that the opposite wall sloped toward them and passed beneath the ledge on which they were standing. It was a very peculiar formation, and seemed to be simply a slanting crack in the solid rock. There was no possibility of ascertaining the depth, nor could they see more than a few yards into the interior. While bending over, a sudden blast of hot air came from below, causing them to start back in alarm. It only lasted a moment, however, and then the passage again took on the chill of an antarctic winter.

There was room enough to camp, and as darkness was coming on apace, they decided to remain there until the following day. Jack had the watch until three with Shannon, at which time he was to call Lovering. A fire had not been lighted from precautionary reasons, and the

cold in the wind-swept passage was extreme. While walking up and down to promote warmth, the middy happened to approach a slight turn in the path, and glancing across the pit, suddenly noticed the reddish glow of a campfire reflected on the opposite wall.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SHOT IN THE DARK.

When Jack saw the reflection of a campfire on the other side of the chasm, he instantly concluded it had been kindled by the unknown visitors whose boat had been found in the river. The discovery was not an unwelcome one to the middy, as he knew an encounter must take place before long, and he was naturally curious to ascertain who they were. If it proved to be the Spaniard, it was well the affair was settled one way or the other. And, on the other hand, if they turned out to be only a party of inoffensive scientists, then all anxiety would be over.

Where the Goodrich expedition had pitched their tents was an open space only a few yards distant from the crevice, but hidden by a curve in the wall. There was no possibility of it being reached without first passing the chasm, and as yet Gordon had not seen any trace of a rope or other means for crossing.

As there was no immediate cause for danger, Jack did not awaken the camp, but concluded to go on a quiet scout and see if he could ascertain anything. Bidding Shannon keep a sharp lookout, the middy saw to his weapons and crept up the passage, hugging the deep shadows of the rocky wall.

A full moon had risen several hours previous, and its

mellow rays filtered down through the opening between the cliffs, rendering objects plainly distinct. Directly ahead flickered the telltale glow of the campfire, casting fantastic figures on the rugged sides, and causing him to see a possible enemy in ever nook and cranny.

On reaching the edge of the mysterious pit, Jack glanced into its depths, but saw nothing save a black, unfathomable abyss. It seemed as if the light from above did not penetrate a yard, so gloomy was the interior. On the other side the passage continued only a short distance, and then made an abrupt turn to the right. It was here the reflection could be seen, indicating that the camp was not far beyond. From his position the middy looked warily across and listened intently. He had heard no sound, either of voices or anything else, indicating the proximity of neighbors. It was strange, as the tunnel-like passage would carry noises a long distance.

Curiosity getting the better of his judgment, he stepped boldly out into the full glare of the moon. Just as he did so, a confused murmur came to his ears, and two men walked into plain view on the other side of the pit. Jack attempted to jump back into the shadows again, but was too late. One of them saw him, and uttering an exclamation of surprise, pointed a revolver in his direction. Before he could discharge it, however, the middy fell prostrate on the ground and wriggled into a place of safety behind a projecting spur of rock. It was rather an undignified movement, but it answered the purpose, and when the bullet struck over his head with an angry spat

a second later, Gordon congratulated himself on his narrow escape.

Peering cautiously from behind the shelter, he saw the men hurrying toward the curve leading to their camp. By the faint light of the moon they appeared to be roughly clad, and were evidently sailors. Before Jack could catch sight of their faces they had disappeared from view.

Rising to his feet he started back with the intention of alarming the rest, but the report of the pistol had already accomplished that. Before he had gone a dozen steps he heard several persons running on the rocky surface of the passage, and then Mr. Goodrich, followed by Lovering and old Brett, joined him.

"Who was it fired that shot? Are you hurt, Jack?" asked the two first in a breath.

Not stopping to reply, the middy hurriedly pushed them back out of range; then jerking his thumb over his shoulder, said, emphatically:

"Those people who came in that fishing smack are over there and they just fired at me. I only saw two, but there are probably more at their camp."

He then explained how he had discovered the fire, and what immediately followed.

While Jack was speaking, Lovering walked to where he could see the crevice, and reported the passage empty, but the reflection of the fire had died away. It was now almost dark in that direction, only a few pale rays sifting down from above, marking the gloomy sides with a quaint network of silvery bars. The weather had turned bitterly

cold since sunset, and an icy wind swept down the passage, causing those who had left warm and comfortable beds to shiver in spite of their heavy coats.

"How do you suppose those people got over there?" asked Mr. Goodrich. "We did not see a rope or any other means for crossing this afternoon."

"That is the most mysterious part of it," replied Jack. "It cannot be possible there is another passage near here. Where is Waroka? he will know."

Leaving Brett on guard at the curve, with strict instructions to report the first sign of the enemy, they withdrew to the camp in search of the native. In reply to their question, the Yaghan, who had become thoroughly accustomed to his new position, said he knew of no other way to pass the mountains, except by the narrow slit they were then in.

He showed such a strong dislike to the subject that Lovering asked him his reasons, shrewdly suspecting there was some superstitious feeling connected with it. Waroka demurred at first, but finally explained that this particular mountain peak was inhabited by "fire-devils," who destroyed all who came in their way with scorching flames. Continuing, he said they had hewn the chasm to mark the boundary of their domains, and that very few of his tribe could be induced to come even this far. When told by Jack that it was the intention of the expedition to press on into the very interior, he exhibited great alarm, and begged them to not go another step farther, as their lives would surely pay the forfeit.

"The fellow is evidently in earnest," said George.

"But I am afraid his wonderful story will not deter us. One thing is certain, however; we will lose his valuable services as soon as we start."

"The question is, when will that be?" replied Mr. Goodrich. "These neighbors of ours undoubtedly hold the fort, and it will be impossible to cross the pit while they stand guard. I think we had better wait until daylight before making a move. We can then scout around and see how the land lays."

"If we can manage to ascend the cliff, and then cross over by ropes, we shall have that other party at our mercy," suggested Jack, with the air of a professional tactician. "Why, they would be like rats in a trap, and we could dictate our——"

He was suddenly interrupted by the barking of a dog from up the passage. Then, immediately following, came the loud report of a Winchester, and Brett was seen advancing toward them, evidently very much excited. They ran to meet him, and on approaching near enough, saw that his rifle was still smoking. Shag kept close to his heels, but they could see him look back and growl ferociously. After pausing to take breath, the old sailor reported that, while watching the continuation of the passage on the other side of the pit, he had seen a man's head project around the curve, close to the ground.

"There was a leetle ray of light just there, an' I got a good glimpse of him," he continued; "an' do you believe, he looked just like that shark who was aboard the *Marie*. I swear if it didn't take the wind out o' me. Before I had time to get over the surprise, the face went away

agin, but another black-whiskered monkey peeked around. I didn't do anything yet, but just waited for a better chance. It kim before long. Seein' there was no one in view, this last fellow stepped out as pert as you please. Then Shag saw him an' barked, an' I let drive in a hurry, but can't say whether I hulled him or not."

"You say it looked like Garcia, or Lopez, the Spaniard who seized the yacht?" asked Mr. Goodrich, gravely, with a glance at the young officers.

"As near as I could make out in the oncertain light. But as that dago is at the bottom of the sea, it couldn't be him very well. This here man had the same kind o' face an' hair, howsomever, an' the 'semblance was close enough to give me a shock."

Bidding him to return to his post, the old gentleman walked slowly in the same direction, followed by Lovering and Jack.

"Well, I suppose the question about giving up the expedition is again in order?" ventured George, with a sly glance at Mr. Goodrich's face.

"No; I have quite made up my mind to go through with it now," replied the latter. "I feel that the Spaniard, if alive, has no better claim to the treasure than we. He voluntarily gave you the secret, and then stole the plans again when he could have had them for the asking. He has murdered and robbed and acted in a manner that entitles him to the short end of a rope only, and I am sorry he is not in a legal executioner's hands at this minute."

This decided change in the old gentleman's views

greatly relieved Jack and Lovering. They had long since felt in the matter as he had just expressed it, and the middy voiced the sentiments of both by saying that they could find a more beneficial use for the wealth than Garcia.

On reaching the turn in the passage they threw themselves on the ground in the darkest shadow, and peered cautiously ahead. Brett's shot had evidently frightened the enemy, as nothing could be seen of them. After watching carefully for fifteen or twenty minutes they returned to the camp and arranged a regular relief guard for the balance of the night.

It was now past four, and there still remained some two hours of darkness. None felt inclined to sleep, so they sat in a little nook out of the wind, and covering themselves with blankets, conversed until the first gray streaks of dawn penetrated the morning mists, proclaiming the coming of day.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ACROSS THE CHASM.

"Waroka tells me we can find a split in the right wall half a mile back, which will lead us to the top of the cliff," said Jack, shortly after daybreak. "He says it is concealed behind a mass of vines, and would not be noticed by a person in passing."

"We will try it," replied Mr. Goodrich, briefly.

At first it was decided to leave the stores in charge of a couple of guards where they had camped, but the possibility of the other party crossing to their side by some unknown means caused the old gentleman to take every one with him.

The tents and other articles were accordingly repacked, and the expedition retraced their steps to the place indicated by the native.

As he had stated, it was simply a narrow crack in the rocky face of the precipice, just broad enough to admit one person at a time. The dirt and other *débris* from above had partially filled the farther end, forming a slope comparatively easy of ascent. The Yaghan led the way, and after a half hour's scrambling, they reached the top of the cliff, out of breath, but victorious.

The height must have been fully two hundred feet, no small elevation to climb under such circumstances. Shag

was the only member of the party that did not feel fatigued. He treated it as a frolic especially originated for his amusement, and showed his appreciation with sundry wags of his tail.

After pausing to rest for a few moments, they started along the top of the precipice to the pit. The surface seemed fairly level, only broken now and again by a slight seam easily crossed, or a miniature ridge of no moment. On both sides the cliff stretched as far as the eye could see, but in front a lofty mountain peak offered an insuperable barrier against which there was no advance.

It had grown warmer since sunrise, and the day promised to be clear and fair. This was a decided relief from the discomforts of the previous night, and it had a cheering effect upon all. Skirting the top of the passage, the expedition finally arrived at the edge of the other crevice, and halted to consider the best method for crossing. It was no easy task, as the distance was a sheer twenty yards at the narrowest portion, and it had to be accomplished with the sole aid of a rope.

"Now, the question is, how are we going to stretch this line?" asked the old gentleman, rather blankly. "There are no kind friends to tie the other end for us, even if we succeed in throwing it across. Here, Brett, you are an old sailor; what do you recommend?"

Ben scratched his head and glanced at the yawning chasm for a moment, then going a short distance toward the right, looked long and earnestly at an object on the opposite side. Finally returning to Mr. Goodrich, he replied:

"It's ruther a ticklish job, sir, but I'll see what I can do."

Taking each separate piece of rope brought from the yacht, he tied them together, and, making a "dead" noose or permanent loop at one end, walked back to the place he had selected. In the meantime, on Lovering's suggestion, a man was stationed at a point overlooking the passage where the enemy had been seen. He was instructed to keep in out of view, and to report instantly on sighting any one. The entire party, with the exception of the man on guard, followed Brett to see how he intended to bridge the abyss.

The old sailor carefully coiled the rope over his left arm; then, grasping the loop near the knot, whirled it around his head with great force, and let fly. Those standing near breathlessly watched the noose circle through the air, nearer and yet nearer the opposite side, until, guided by an unerring hand, it finally settled down over a projecting point of rock. It was a magnificent effort, and proved successful at the first trial. Several sharp tugs on the line did not loosen the anchorage, so, fastening the other end, old Brett, reported it ready for crossing.

"Being as how I've rigged the stay, I make bold to ask permission to go over first," he added, apologetically. "An' furthermore, if it carries my weight, all the rest of you needn't fear."

Mr. Goodrich thought it best to send a smaller man, but Ben pushed his claim so strenuously that he consented. Tying a light rope around his shoulder, he cautiously

lowered himself over the side of the chasm, and slowly worked his way, hand over hand, across to the other end. The line sagged to such an extent that he was compelled to haul his entire weight up an almost perpendicular ascent, but by using his feet against the rough sides he at last clambered on the rocky surface in safety.

After resting a moment, Brett rigged a pulley he had brought with him to the spur, and soon had a boatswain's chair ready for operation. The chair, so called, only consisted of a flat board suspended by two short pieces to runners working on the main rope. Jack seated himself in the novel vehicle, and was pulled across by Ben. Then Lovering followed, and finally all save Shannon passed in safety. The latter had been selected to remain behind and guard the bridge in case the natives discovered its existence. He was given sufficient food and bedding, as well as all the shelter tents, and also allowed to retain Shag as an assistant.

Waroka would not cross with the party under any consideration, but promised to remain several days with Shannon. There was little chance of companionship between them, as neither understood the other's language; but, as the Irishman said, "the soight of a human phiz now an' agin is better than nothin', even if it is a monkey-faced ape loike Waroka."

The place they now found themselves in was only a couple of hundred yards from the passage where the reflection of the camp-fire had been seen by Jack. By walking that distance they could look directly down upon the strangers who had fired the shot. Bidding the others

wait near the rope. Mr. Goodrich and the young officers advanced cautiously to the crevice, and, preparing their weapons for immediate use, peered over the edge.

The strangers were gone!

As far as the watchers could see, the passage was entirely deserted, but directly beneath them were strewn the remains of the camp. Half-burnt fragments of wood, an empty can, and an old piece of canvas formed the only objects visible.

"By Jove! they have skipped out!" exclaimed Jack, disappointed. "They must have gone up the passage toward the crater. Whoever it is, they must know what we are after, and are trying to get ahead of us."

"That is about it," coincided Mr. Goodrich. "They must have knowledge of the treasure, and therefore wish to reach the place first. Well, we have gone too far to give up without a struggle. No time is to be lost. Once down below there, the rest will be plain sailing."

Suddenly Lovering, who had been walking along the edge a short distance, called out that he could see a depression in the cliff that would materially shorten the distance to the bottom.

"By using the rope stretched across the pit, we can lower ourselves down here and follow that other party at once," he continued, pointing out the spot indicated. "We can leave the smaller line, and by that have the means to rig the bridge again."

His plan was adopted at once. Returning to where old Brett and the others had been stationed, Jack explained to the sailor what they wished. It required but a few

minutes to accomplish the change, and presently the party had at their command an easy method of continuing the journey.

"Bill Wilson's head was level when he recommended the use of a ten-fathom rope," said Gordon, while they were preparing to descend.

"But he did not mean his good advice for us," said George, with a smile. "I am afraid he would have omitted that item if he had only known the ultimate destination of his plan."

"Do you think it is advisable to leave any one on this side of the pit?" asked Mr. Goodrich.

"Most certainly, sir," replied Jack, emphatically. "With one man here to haul up the rope after we are gone, our system of retreat will be perfect. If we leave it dangling down within reach of anybody, our friends, the enemy, may return and utilize it to our discomfiture. I think Wilkins is the best man to remain in charge."

"That will leave us Brett and Sam; five all told. Well, I suppose you are right, my boy. Come to look at it, the idea is really a good one, and we will know that our way out of the place is secured."

Wilkins was accordingly given his instructions, and the fact impressed on him that his new duties were of the greatest importance. Provisions for several days were left, and, at George's advice, one of the shelter tents was hauled over on the line still stretched across the pit.

After calling to Shannon, and advising him of the new arrangements, the remaining members of the party descended the rope into the passage. It was simply a

continuation of the one on the other side of the chasm, and of the same rocky formation. After passing the curve, it ran straight ahead for several hundred yards, and then made another abrupt detour. They noticed that the further they went, the higher the walls became on both sides, until at last, after traveling a mile, only a narrow crack could be seen above.

The interior grew dark and gloomy, and a cold wind, which had commenced to blow since the party entered the passage, caused them to button their heavy coats more closely.

The advance was made with extreme caution. There were ample facilities for successful ambuscades, and, since the episode of the night before, it was reasonable to expect one. Every little while they would halt, and listen for sounds of those in front, but nothing came to their ears except an occasional murmur of the wind blowing overhead.

"The plan says this opening leading to the crater branches off the main passage two miles from the black pit, doesn't it?" whispered George, after they had gone almost that distance.

"Yes; if I remember rightly, it reads that way," replied Jack. "We ought to be there now."

Almost as he spoke, old Brett, who was a short distance in advance, halted and pointed to a cavity in the left wall. A brief examination proved it to be the entrance to the tunnel.

"It doesn't look altogether inviting," remarked Mr. Goodrich, vainly endeavoring to pierce the impenetrable

gloom of the interior. "If we could only carry lights, it would be more satisfactory."

"We could travel faster, of course," replied Lovering; "but it would be only a beacon for our unknown competitors, and form a guide for their unfriendly bullets. No, I am afraid we will have to trust to our hands and feet."

"There is not a bit of air coming through the opening," said Jack, who had walked several feet inside. "It is as warm as toast, too. I suppose that goes to show there is no exit at the other end. See how the wind blows out there, and then compare it with this."

"There can be no mistake about this being the tunnel mentioned on the map?" ventured the old gentleman, doubtfully.

"Oh, no! this must be the one," decided George. "We have undoubtedly come two miles from the black pit, and this is the only opening on the left that I can see. Anyway, it won't do any harm to explore it."

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE TUNNEL.

Before entering, Jack looked at his watch. It was just ten o'clock; four hours since they broke camp on the other side of the chasm. There still remained ample time to go some distance and back to the rope before nightfall, although there was no necessity for returning by that time. The party had plenty of provisions, and from the whiff they received at the mouth of the opening, there would be no immediate need of fire for heating purposes.

The tunnel looked so dark and forbidding that Gordon, producing a strong cord from his pocket, advised each one to hold it to keep from being separated from the others while on the march. Taking the lead, he gave the word, and they passed, single file, into the interior.

The progress was slow at first, on account of the extreme darkness encountered after leaving the passage. The floor seemed smooth enough, and proved far superior to the pampas over which they had traveled coming from the coast. As Jack had said, there was not the least draught of air blowing in their direction, and the atmosphere seemed warm and vapid; so much so, in fact, that they were soon forced to remove their heavy coats.

The gloom deepened as they progressed further from

the entrance, until at last it was mere groping in the dark, and each step had to be made with caution. All carried their revolvers in readiness for instant use, and Sam, who brought up the rear, was given a lantern and matches to furnish a light if needed. The tunnel seemed to wind in diverse turns almost from the beginning, and in one place Lovering declared it had crossed above itself without apparent cause. They kept close to the right wall, being careful, however, to avoid coming in contact with possible projecting spurs of rock, but as yet the passage seemed remarkably free from obstacles.

"I believe this has been partially, if not entirely, quarried out, George," whispered Gordon to his next neighbor, the young surgeon.

"It is possible, but it must have been a stupendous task, and taken years of hard labor to accomplish. We have traveled at least a quarter of a mile already, and the end is not yet. I confess I am getting rather tired of this blind-man's-buff style, and wish it would develop into livelier action."

"Have you noticed the increase in warmth? I think the temperature has risen steadily since we entered, and if it continues to do so much longer, we will melt, and run the rest of the way."

Lovering laughed, and plodded after the middy. Mr. Goodrich had not spoken for some time, but they could hear him utter a prolonged "Phew!" expressive of the heat every little while. Sam appeared the only one satisfied with the change, and even he at last ceased his characteristic expressions of content.

Another alarming discovery made was the peculiar condition of the air. It had grown so foul and dense that difficulty was experienced in breathing, and the young leader finally called a halt to consult with the others. They drew up close to the wall, and, putting down their knapsacks and guns, rested while the matter was discussed.

"We cannot stand this much longer, I am afraid," began Jack, wiping his face for the hundredth time. "The heat is bad enough, but this atmosphere would kill a horse. Sometimes it reminds me of a ship's bilge badly in need of renovation. And the trouble is, the further we go the worse it becomes."

"It is very similar to abandoned mines partly filled with stagnant water," said the old gentleman. "But we had better try a little longer, perhaps the air may change; anyway, it is still—what noise is that?"

A peculiar rattling, as if from heavy shoes running on the rocky floor, came to their ears. At first it was faint and barely perceptible, but as they listened with bated breath, it increased until it sounded close at hand, and then, to their astonishment and momentary terror, some unseen object brushed past and continued down the tunnel.

That it was a man they knew from several exclamations of fright heard while he was near. The exclamations were in Spanish, and betokened extreme fear. Before they recovered sufficiently from their surprise to speak, the noise had died away in the distance.

"What was that?" gasped George, feeling around to see if the others were still with him.

"Some fellow in a hurry, I reckon," coolly replied Jack, lowering his revolver, which he had leveled at the first indication of danger. "I think it was one of the party we ran across last night, and from all appearances they have encountered a decided opposition to their little scheme. It is just possible the others will be along presently."

Just then Brett called out that Sam had disappeared. Jack hurried back to the old sailor's side, and, reaching out in the darkness, endeavored to find the negro lad.

"When did you first discover his absence?" he asked.

"Just this very minute. He was here alongside of me before that thing runned past, but when I turned around to tell him to not be skeered, he didn't answer, an', on groping for him, I touched nothing but the wall and floor. It's my opinion he's keeled over from fright, or run away."

"Sam! O, Sam! where are you?" cried Gordon, cautiously. The sound, slight as it was, echoed from side to side of the narrow space with alarming intensity.

"This will never do," exclaimed Lovering, in annoyance. "We are liable to bring a host of those people about our ears at any moment. The best plan is to turn back until we find him, and then proceed again."

The young surgeon's advice was taken, and, searching every foot of the way, they retreated down the passage. Suddenly Ben, who was in advance, struck something with his foot, and nearly fell prostrate. A dismal groan

came from beneath him, and, stooping over, he lifted up the object.

It was Sam!

"Oh! please, mister cannibal, don't eat me. I'se tough like cowhide, 'deed I is," wailed the terrified boy, struggling to free himself from the sailor's strong grasp.

Giving him a shake, Ben told him to stand on his feet and keep quiet.

"What do you mean by running away like that?" demanded Mr. Goodrich, sternly. "I am almost determined to send you back to the passage. For shame! to get frightened like that!"

Poor Sam made no reply, but clung fast to Brett's arm, and followed the party in deep humiliation. Returning to the spot where they had left the knapsacks, they donned them again, and continued the march up the tunnel. Even greater care was exercised in walking, if possible, and, enduring the heat and vapid air as best they could, the expedition proceeded in silence.

Presently a gradual brightening of the interior was noticed—a dim radiance emanating from some unknown source in front of them; and they halted again. It was a peculiar glow, reddish in hue, and seemed to waver and increase at irregular intervals. A faint, murmuring sound also came from the same direction, low and rhythmic in tone. It was uncanny, to say the least.

Suddenly a loud shriek rang out, a cry of mortal agony, and then silence again, only broken by that weird noise. It had grown light enough for them to distinguish each other, and the middy, looking in the young surgeon's face,

read something there which caused him to grasp his revolver and point up the tunnel. The action was enough. Followed by the rest, Jack walked steadily ahead, and, turning an abrupt angle in the wall, came upon a scene which caused him to gasp and shrink back in sudden terror!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GOLDEN CRATER PEOPLE.

The scene unfolded before the middy and his companions as they reached the abrupt turn in the tunnel was one never to be forgotten. A dozen yards beyond them the narrow passage widened into a lofty chamber, the roof of which was barely discernible far overhead.

It was broad, and seemed paved with a glittering substance which shone and sparkled with the power of a noonday sun. A strange radiance filled the cavern, for cavern it was, coming from a most wonderful source.

Directly in the center, and running diagonally across from a point on the left, was a stream of molten lava, twisting and winding in serpentine curves to a huge orifice in the further wall, where it finally passed from view.

Just before reaching this exit it spread into a miniature lake double its ordinary width, and formed a seething mass of fire, from which bubbled little fountains of bluish flame. The sight itself was awe-inspiring, but that which caused Jack to start back with terror was a scene being enacted on its very edge.

A hundred grotesque figures stood grouped around it, figures so weird and uncanny that the onlookers could scarce believe their eyes. They were diminutive in

stature, and of such misshapen form that they resembled some strange and fabled monsters only to be met with in tales of the magi. They wore no clothing, but, covering them from the small, baboon-shaped head to the claw-like feet, was a thick skin, which apparently rendered them impervious to the intense heat thrown off by the burning lava.

Moving back and forth in a ceaseless dance, which followed no settled pattern, but seemed the obedience of a momentary whim, they circled the edge of the molten lake, chanting a dirge of tuneless meter. The sound was low and murmuring, like the continuous babble of a swollen brook, and did not increase or diminish in volume.

Back of them, bound and helpless, were the forms of four men seated on the sparkling floor. They had been placed side by side, with their ashen faces turned to an elevated spot in the center, on which could be seen one of their number also secured; but his lashing seemed to consist of ropes formed of the same substance as the floor and walls of the cave, a bright and light-reflecting material impossible to describe.

The pedestal on which he crouched was shaped like a shallow bowl or plate, and stood at least three feet above the level. Behind it, and slightly above, ran another river of lava, following a narrow channel evidently cut for the purpose. Just where the stream passed it the outlines of an aperture, now securely closed with a block of stone, was visible, but, to the horror of the watchers at the tunnel entrance, one of the demoniac crew was en-

deavoring to free the impediment, so the consuming fluid could descend on the hapless wretch beneath.

He had almost succeeded; already a thin, thread-like line trickled over the edge, still too small to spurt the required distance, when, with a half-strangled gasp of excitement, Jack leveled his revolver and fired. The bullet sped true to its aim, and, striking the strange figure just below the neck, brought him to the floor.

The loud report was the signal for a general fusillade. Abruptly awakened by the familiar sound from the spell cast over them, the others poured a death-dealing volley into the midst of the group crowded around the lake. For the space of a moment they stood as if paralyzed; then, with incredible activity, the entire body fled toward an opening on the other side of the cavern, and disappeared.

"Now is our chance!" shouted Gordon, starting to run across the cave to where the men were. He was immediately followed by all save the negro lad, who stood rooted to the floor with terror. It was only the work of a moment to release those in the middle of the cavern, but when old Brett, who had picked out the man on the altar, reached his side, one glance at the bowed head and helpless limbs showed that he was past all earthly aid—stricken to death by an excess of fear.

Half-carrying, half-dragging the others in frenzied haste to the entrance, they gained it just in time. Pausing there for a second, Gordon happened to glance upward, and saw a score of gleaming points rapidly forming into drops of fire.

"Back for your lives!" fairly shouted the middy, and, pushing those in front of him, who were still ignorant of the new danger, into the tunnel, he leaped into a place of safety. One backward glance into the cavern was enough. The very walls seemed ablaze, and streaming from above were perfect sheets of living flame, which scorched the eye, and drove the horrified watchers away from the opening in breathless haste.

"This is terrible!" exclaimed George, as they came to a standstill some distance down the passage. The heat was intense, even where they stood, still it was bearable; and a halt was made by unanimous consent to ascertain what to do next. One fear occupied the minds of all, a fear that the burning mass would be turned by some unknown means into the tunnel, and destroy them before the outer crevice could be reached. After seeing what had taken place, nothing was too improbable to expect.

The light from the cave penetrated for a long distance, and where they now stood objects were plainly visible. By it Jack and the others could see whom they had so bravely rescued from a frightful fate. Three of the four seemed, from their dark complexion and swarthy hair, to be Spaniards or Italians, but the fourth was evidently of Anglo-Saxon descent. As yet the effort in escaping from the fiery cavern had precluded all conversation, but when they halted for a moment's rest this last man turned to Mr. Goodrich, and, in a voice filled with emotion, thanked him over and over again for their deliverance. He spoke in English and with a strong American intonation.

"You were not a moment too soon, sir," he continued, grasping the old gentleman by the hand, and shaking it heartily. "Those fiends would have destroyed us all. One of our number escaped just as the rest of us were captured. He ran down this tunnel."

"It was probably he who passed us while we were coming up," replied Lovering, explaining the occurrence.

"I don't think it altogether safe here," remarked Jack, peering anxiously in the direction whence they had come. "Suppose we go outside and then talk."

His suggestion was agreed to, and the entire party hurried to the outer passage. Once there, they paused in front of the entrance while the American, for such he proved to be, told his story. He seemed to be a young man, probably not over twenty-five, and had quite an intelligent face, very different from his companions, who were evidently of the most illiterate class.

"My name is Clark, Walter Clark, and I came from Boston, where, three months ago, I shipped on a steamer bound for Valparaiso," he began. "In passing through the Straits we struck on a rock near Sandy Point, and were totally wrecked. All of the crew escaped in boats, and landed at the latter place to wait for one of the vessels calling in for coal. While walking down the one street a couple of weeks ago a Spaniard stopped me, and wished to know whether I would join a party bound for the interior of this island to search for treasure.

"I thought he was joking or crazy at first, and laughed in his face, but he persisted so that I soon saw he meant what he said, and, furthermore, was evidently in posses-

sion of some secret which he did not care to share with me. To make the story short, he agreed to pay me one hundred dollars for the trip and a share of all that was found. Under that promise I came here, together with four others, in a little fishing smack, which we left on the eastern coast."

Jack and Lovering exchanged glances. This was the boat now anchored near the *Marie*. They were right in taking the precaution after all.

"It was a terrible trip to the mountains," resumed Clark. "At first we lost our way, and the food almost gave out. In fact, I believe if it hadn't been for a couple of guanacos, shot on the third day, we would have been compelled to give up. The chief was a very determined man, however, and we plodded along until the entrance to this passage was reached. After reading a sort of document, he pronounced it the entrance to the treasure chamber. We had fetched a rope from the boat, which, together with a sort of grapnel at the end, enabled us to bridge the peculiar gulch just below here.

"After crossing, the rope was removed for some reason, and stowed under some pieces of rock near by. The Spaniard was very cautious, and seemed afraid that some one would follow him, because two men were left on guard where we crossed. The rest of us came to this tunnel, and made our way in to another one running off to the left. It is about half-way between the entrance and the big cave. After going up that for a short distance we got into a small room, which contained a lot of gold, and some stones which look like diamonds.

"There was enough to make us all rich forty times over, but the chief wasn't satisfied. He made us leave it, and go back into the main passage, and follow that up until we reached that awful place where we very nearly met our death."

The narrator's voice trembled, and he paused, almost overcome at the recollection. Lovering had listened to the story with deep interest until now. Rising from where he had been seated on a block of stone, he walked over to Clark, and, placing his hand on his shoulder, said, gently:

"I want you to describe this Spaniard to me. What does he look like?"

Glancing at his questioner in surprise, the American answered:

"Why, he's a man about forty years of age; has black hair and eyes, and looks as if he had been sick lately."

Turning to Mr. Goodrich and Jack, the young surgeon remarked, with the least possible trace of excitement in his voice:

"Just as I expected; it is our worthy mutineer, Manuel Garcia, alias Lopez!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

ATTACKED!

The news did not surprise either the old gentleman or Gordon. In fact, each had a strong suspicion that the leader of the other expedition was the Spaniard. When Clark began his recital Jack instantly divined what the result would be, and now, when the identity was proved beyond a doubt, he merely nodded his head, and said nothing. Not so Mr. Goodrich. Jumping to his feet, he asked anxiously:

"Who was it that escaped? One of the sailors?"

"No," came the reply. "It was the chief—the man you probably recognize. He fled at the first intimation of danger, and managed to gain the tunnel. When we arrived at the cavern it was only partially lighted by some unknown means, and the place appeared empty. We noticed the peculiar cracks in the floor, and that raised pedestal, but paid no attention to them. Before we had been there more than a few minutes the two guards left at the gulch came in, and told the chief they had seen a man on the other side. The information seemed to scare him, and he went back with them, leaving us in the cave. He returned in about two hours, very much excited. We looked all around trying to find another cavern he said was here, but finally had to give it up. He then said we would try that first tunnel again, and started to leave.

"The rest of us were just on the point of following, when we were set upon by a crowd of those little fiends, who, despite our efforts, overpowered us. Instantly seeing the danger, the chief, who was nearest the entrance, darted away, and escaped. You know what followed."

"I don't like the idea of that scoundrel being free on the island," said Mr. Goodrich, thinking of the yacht.

"It is my opinion he is caught in a trap, and if Wilkins or Shannon don't shoot him we are liable to run across the fellow somewhere below here," replied George. "And, by the way, it is just as well to keep a careful lookout, or he'll pot one of us."

"What about this gold?" suddenly asked Jack, looking from one to the other. "We are surely not going to leave without trying to obtain it."

"Not much!" exclaimed Lovering, decidedly. "But I think Clark here has something to say about it. Without him we would probably have never discovered its whereabouts."

"And without your aid in securing it the treasure would remain in the cave," quickly replied the American. "No, I lay claim to my share only. If it is decided to return and make another trial I am willing to go with you, although, to tell the truth, I don't like the job. All the gold on earth wouldn't draw me there alone." The significant shudder with which he concluded the sentence proved the truth of his assertion.

Mr. Goodrich did not appear over-pleased either, although he gave his consent when spoken to on the subject by Jack. As for old Brett, he had no opinion, one way

or the other, and said he was simply there to obey orders. The three men with Clark utterly refused to go past the entrance, and nothing the rest could say altered their determination.

This was liable to prove a serious quandary. It would not do to leave them go down the passage and rejoin Garcia, thereby giving that individual sufficient force to cause trouble, nor did they care to split up their party, but one of the two plans would have to be adopted.

After some consideration, it was decided to place them under charge of old Brett and Sam. The negro lad hailed the decision with joy, as the prospect of again encountering the people of the crater was fast resolving him into a quaking imbecile.

As it now stood, the party to re-enter the interior consisted of Mr. Goodrich, Jack, Lovering, and Clark, amply sufficient to secure enough gold for all, and perfectly able to defend themselves in case the number arrayed against them was not overwhelming.

Three knapsacks were taken along to be used in transporting the treasure. Each man discarded his rifle, but carried two revolvers instead, with plenty of ammunition. During the few minutes occupied with preparations the old gentleman briefly explained to the American what had occurred during and after the revolution.

"If I had known the character of the man, I would never have joined the expedition," said Clark, in reply. "He treated me fairly well, but he probably would have murdered us all in some manner after obtaining the gold."

"Not the slightest doubt of it," agreed Lovering. "The

"The attack." See page 108.

man is crazy, literally insane over the treasure, and instead of being satisfied with a legitimate share of it, kills people right and left to get it all. He is now receiving his reward."

After giving strict orders to Brett about keeping a close watch for Garcia, the party entered the tunnel, and walked steadily ahead for several hundred yards. Then, after halting a moment to see if everything were in readiness for a possible attack, they continued, but more cautiously.

The interior was now pitch dark, not even the faint, peculiar glow noticed during the previous journey being visible. Even the heat had grown less, and it was far easier to breathe, all of which rendered the interior far more comfortable. No attempt was made at conversing, but each bent his energies in following the winding and tortuous passage without coming in contact with the walls.

After walking what seemed to be a quarter of a mile, Clark, who had taken the lead, paused, and said, in a low tone:

"We must be near the opening. It is somewhere along here, on the left side."

"If we could only strike a match it would help us greatly," remarked Mr. Goodrich.

"That would never do, sir," replied George, quickly. "The light would bring those little fiends down on us without a moment's warning. No; we had better search the wall, but be careful to avoid being separated."

While the young surgeon was speaking Jack slipped

away, and, feeling along the rough stone, suddenly ran his hand into a cavity. Making a momentary inspection, he found that it only extended a little over four feet from the floor, and seemed of about the same width. Acquainting the others with his discovery in a few hasty words, he asked Clark if the tunnel was of that size.

"Yes; this must be it," he replied. "I forgot to tell you it was only a low, narrow cut, but by stooping slightly you can pass through. The cave is only a minute's walk from here, straight ahead. The new tunnel doesn't zigzag like this one."

For the first time since leaving the outer crevice the party hesitated. Here was the gateway to a treasure which would bring them boundless wealth; all that remained to be done was to walk a short distance further, and then load themselves with what one of their number had declared to be pure virgin gold—that mightiest of metals, which has gilded the thoughts of avaricious man since time immemorial—and yet they wavered.

With all their bravery of spirit, the startling events of the day had had their effect. The scene in the cavern, not two hours past, remained pictured before them, and they felt, one and all, as if entering the aperture was like closing the portals of the outer world forever.

Lovering was the first to move. Bending over, he passed in, and with a curt "Come on," crept steadily ahead. Slightly ashamed, the others followed him, and after a short walk in that uncomfortable position reached a more extended space.

"The place was light enough when we were here be-

fore," whispered Clark, after stating that the cavern had finally been reached. "I don't know what to make of this darkness; it looks ominous. We had better get what we want and leave at once."

The rest heartily agreed with him, and, at his advice, commenced searching the apartment for the treasure. He said they would find the gold lying about in lumps or nuggets scattered in a haphazard fashion. As for the precious stones, they were mixed in the same mass.

An exclamation from Mr. Goodrich indicated that he had found something; then Jack, uttering a cry of excitement, fell upon his knees and commenced to fill his knapsack with the fragments which seemed to literally cover the floor. For the space of a moment the silence was only broken by the sounds of heavy breathing or an occasional gasp from the hurrying men, then suddenly and without warning a vivid light dispelled the darkness, and before their eyes, dazzled by the change, could see their danger, the cave was filled by the natives of the crater.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FIGHT IN THE CAVE.

The attack was so unexpected that it found two of the party kneeling on the floor busily engaged in filling their knapsacks with the precious metal. Gordon and Lovering had just finished, and slung the bags over their shoulders, when the sudden illumination of the cavern occurred.

Before the others could arise they were surrounded by scores of the little savages, and in an instant a desperate hand-to-hand struggle began. Mr. Goodrich was borne prostrate at first, actually weighed down by overwhelming numbers, but, wrestling with a strength incredible in one of his age, succeeded in freeing his arms. Drawing a revolver, he fired rapidly at those near him, and managed to force his way to Clark's side.

The latter had scrambled erect, dragging with him four or five of the attacking force, who clung to his back and limbs with the tenacity of wild beasts. Seizing one around the waist, he lifted him over his head with a power born of desperation, and hurled the living missile into the ranks of the savages, knocking them down like nine-pins.

The cave resounded with the din of conflict. Revolver shots following each other in rapid succession, their spite-

ful reports echoing from wall to wall in one unceasing volley; the short gasps of the men as they fought in the unequal struggle, and above all that strange, grewsome chant of the natives, formed a pandemonium impossible to describe.

At the first onslaught, Jack had turned, and with one bound placed himself back to back with Lovering. Giving a sweep with his right arm he cleared a circle, and, firing rapidly, killed three of his assailants before they could crowd in again. Hearing a sharp cry he faced about, and was just in time to see the old gentleman stagger and fall.

With a superhuman effort the middy wrenched himself free from those immediately around him, and, kicking, striking, wrestling, managed to cross the intervening space separating him from Mr. Goodrich. He was apparently just in time. The savages had succeeded in passing a coil of queer-looking material around the prostrate form, and were in the act of tightening it when Gordon sprang in their midst.

His revolver was empty, but, grasping it by the barrel, he launched out right and left with telling force. The young surgeon, seeing his move, had followed just behind, and, standing close together, they continued the gallant fight over the almost inanimate body of their friend.

In the meantime Clark had not been idle. He was a muscular young fellow, bred in a school of hard knocks and self-reliance, but when he saw the perilous trap into which they had fallen he knew that nothing short of a

miracle could save them. Still, following that natural instinct which causes even the timid doe to turn at bay, he fought with unfailing courage, and, gradually edging his way to the rocky wall, beat off the foe with lusty blows.

It could not last much longer. There seemed to be no end to the natives. As fast as one would go down another would take his place, and, although without weapons, they promised to conquer by sheer force of numbers. The mysterious light, which, coming from some unknown source, rendered the cave as bright as day, still continued. There was a weirdness about its glow which made the scene like a page from the "Inferno," and caused the combatants to feel as if they were battling with demons from another world.

The peculiar appearance of the natives themselves, with their small, ape-like bodies and that queer, scaly covering, like the hideous folds of a rhinoceros' skin, also had its effect. It was only the extreme short range which made the leaden bullets penetrate their natural armor, but as it was the revolvers of the party brought a full score to the ground before the final struggle.

While fighting side by side with the young surgeon Jack managed to gasp:

"It will soon be over, old fellow. We can't stand the pace much longer. I—I feel my legs giving out, but don't give up the ship, don't give——"

The sentence was lost in one grand effort of the brave lad. Hastily picking up Clark's knapsack, lying at his feet, laden with its heavy contents, he grasped the

leathern strap, and struck one mighty blow at those in front of him. The effect was terrific.

The novel weapon literally mowed a swath in the advancing line. Seeing his advantage, Jack took heart, and, calling to the others to follow him, forced his way over the bodies of the fallen to where he had suddenly caught sight of the tunnel entrance.

The combined efforts of the three fighting together in a small space had kept the natives back far enough to enable Mr. Goodrich to scramble erect again. When the middy started away from the others they immediately saw what he was aiming at, and tried their utmost to follow him.

Inch by inch, over the rocky floor, strewn with its wealth of gold, they went, until at last, almost exhausted by the terrible strain, they reached the aperture leading from the cavern.

Safety was not assured. In the tunnel could be seen more of the savages, but, owing to its narrow limits, their numbers did not offer much of an obstacle. Jack was still in the lead, and after he had finally forced his way into the passage he gave the knapsack to the old gentleman, who was just behind him, and used his fists instead.

The American brought up the rear, hard pressed by the discomfited natives. Seeing the prey slipping out of their grasp, they redoubled their efforts, but Clark kept them off successfully, and backed after his companions.

After what seemed an eternity of time, they reached the outer tunnel. As they gradually left the cavern behind

the light faded until it at last merged into darkness again. The change was welcome, however; with the disappearance of the unearthly glow went their pursuers. Silently and as mysteriously as they came, the natives vanished, leaving the sorely tried men to stumble along the winding passage into the freedom of the outer world.

Old Ben Brett, waiting patiently near the entrance with Sam, and the Spaniards close at hand, was suddenly startled by seeing four bent and staggering figures crawl through the opening, and fall prone on the stone-strewn floor.

"Water, man; give us water!" gasped one, the middy, raising himself on elbow. Then, grasping the canteen extended by the horrified sailor, he passed it to Mr. Goodrich. The old gentleman eagerly swallowed several mouthfuls, and returned it to Jack, who gulped down the remainder with a sigh of satisfaction. In the meantime the negro lad had hurried to the assistance of Lovering and Clark with another canteen of the cooling liquid.

Stretched out on the ground, they rested blissfully for five minutes, only uttering an occasional word of direction to Ben or the boy. A cold wind sweeping through the passage refreshed them wonderfully, and they were soon able to sit up and look at each other with an expression of mutual congratulation and thankfulness.

The first things to receive attention were the three knapsacks and their contents. As the reader will remember, one each had been brought out by Jack and Lovering; then the one Clark had partly filled—the middy's weapon—was carried through the main tunnel by Mr. Goodrich,

who, notwithstanding his wild race for safety, had clung to the precious burden with unfaltering determination.

Too worn out and exhausted to remove them, both Jack and the young surgeon had taken their much-needed rest with the bags still on their backs. Now, slowly casting off the straps, they dropped them carefully to the ground, and, lifting the flaps, gazed within.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A PERILOUS PREDICAMENT.

Filling the capacious sacks to the brim were innumerable nuggets of virgin gold of all sizes and shapes. Some large as hen's eggs and others huge lumps broader than a man's hand; while scattered among the heavier pieces of dull yellow metal were scores of smaller fragments, each of good value. Here and there could be seen in the mass curiously-rounded stones, reflecting the dim light of the passage in a multitude of sparkling points. They were uncut diamonds of the first water.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Lovering, selecting one of the largest, and holding it up to where a little gleam of sunshine had penetrated through the rift overhead. "This is worth a fortune in itself. It would honor the diadem of the greatest sovereign on earth."

"And here is another equally as valuable," said Jack. Pushing the gold slightly to one side, he drew out three more in succession, differing but little from that the young surgeon had praised. There were also smaller stones, each probably weighing several carats, to the number of twenty in plain view on top.

The middy started to empty the sack to search for others, but Mr. Goodrich interrupted him by saying:

"Let us postpone the examination until we return on

board, Jack. I think it is advisable to leave this vicinity at once. And now that our aim is secured we have no further reason for delay. We have accomplished more than I really expected, and the best plan is to place this treasure in a safe place."

"Yes, by all means," coincided George, with a side-long glance at the mouth of the adjacent tunnel. "We have been extremely fortunate, and it would be the height of folly to jeopardize what we have wrested from that horrible place at the peril of our lives. Let us go at once."

There was no dissenting voice. All were equally glad to leave the spot which had so nearly proven their tomb; so, after securely fastening the knapsacks, the party marched down the passage toward the black pit, keeping a sharp lookout for Garcia. After an hour's walk they came in sight of the cliff where Wilkins had been left on guard.

Halting under the edge over which they had descended, Jack called loudly for the sailor. Receiving no answer, he repeated the effort, aided by Lovering and Brett. Still no reply. Only the sound of their voices echoed from wall to wall in mocking tones. Waiting impatiently, and with a growing anxiety, for several minutes, they tried again, but with the same results.

Wilkins had disappeared!

The sailor left on guard at the top of the cliff had received instructions from Jack to haul up the rope by which the party had descended into the passage, and to watch constantly for their return. He was a very steady

man, and one in whom the young leader placed every confidence.

Jack knew that only great personal danger could induce him to leave his post of duty, but whatever the cause, the unpleasant fact stared them in the face that they were on the wrong side of the black pit with no apparent way for crossing.

"Something has happened to Wilkins," said Lovering, his face paling despite the strong control he invariably exercised over his emotions. "The man is too faithful to leave us in the lurch."

"This is the worst misfortune we have met," said Mr. Goodrich. "If he has been killed or gone away, our situation will be desperate, indeed."

"Why not fire all the revolvers at once," eagerly recommended the middy, always prolific of resources. "He may have only strolled a short distance, not expecting us so soon."

Anything was preferable to being idle; so, pointing their pistols in the air, they fired simultaneously. It sounded as one discharge, and the loud report rolled and reverberated from side to side of the narrow passage in innumerable echoes. A fragment of stone, loosened by the shock, fell at their feet, but no friendly face peered over the cliff, and they turned away disheartened.

"Didn't I hear you say as how that onery mutineer had a piece of rope hid around here somewhere?" suddenly asked Brett of Clark.

"Great Scott! so he did. I had forgotten that," re-

plied the American. "He stowed it away up the road a bit. Hurry! it may be there yet."

Setting out on a run, accompanied by Jack, he passed the curve where his party had built their fire the previous night, and stopped in front of a pile of stones which had dropped at odd times from above. Hastily throwing them aside, he looked anxiously underneath for a moment, and then turned to the middy with an exclamation of disappointment.

"It's gone! The Spaniard must have taken it just before we arrived."

"Are you sure, Clark?" questioned Jack, anxiously. "Look again, and I'll scout around a little above here. It we don't find it, our chance for escaping is slim. Confound it! This is too bad. Here we are caged in like rats in a trap, and after getting the treasure, too."

"I think we would be willing to pay more than its weight in gold for a rope now," remarked Clark, with a sorry attempt at a smile.

"Yes; double that. And to think of the spare fathoms kicking around junk-shops and other places. That is always the way; necessity sets the price."

While speaking, Jack assisted him in his second search, then, finding nothing there, both scoured the passage for several hundred yards, but without result. The rope had undoubtedly been removed.

"We might as well rejoin the others," finally said Gordon, starting to return. "Misery loves company, you know, and I am afraid we are destined to drink of the cup pretty deeply."

They were met at the turn by Lovering and Mr. Goodrich, who, on seeing their empty hands, did not ask useless questions. The situation was becoming very grave. Even Sam caught the infection, and the expression of alarm on his ebony countenance reflected his evident perturbation. When they reached the chasm they found Brett seated on its edge, glancing across in a contemplative manner.

"D'ye know," he said to the old gentleman, "them shots ought to have been heard by Shannon as well as Wilkins. The sound would surely carry that far, an' it's a good proof that he is gone, too. I can't understand what has happened to them; they are not the kind to leave a shipmate in a hole. I believe that pison snake of a dago has had something to do with this, as sure as you are born."

"No doubt, no doubt," exclaimed Mr. Goodrich, bitterly. "All our misfortunes are dated from the day he boarded the yacht in Buenos Ayres. It seems as if the evil fates are working for him. He has escaped three times, but his reward is surely coming."

The other members of the Spaniard's expedition had remained very quiet since their rescue from the cavern. They had shown their gratitude by strictly obeying orders, and evincing a willingness to assist wherever possible, and the Goodrich party were favorably impressed by them. Although perfectly cognizant of the perilous predicament, they displayed but little emotion, leaving their future safety in the hands of the others. It was characteristic of the race.

It was now getting late in the afternoon, and the party had eaten nothing since early morning, but all thoughts of food were banished before the momentous question of the hour. They were convinced that nothing need be expected from the two sailors left on guard. Every method possible for making known their presence had been exhausted, and now there remained only one resource. And that was to husband their stores, and wait patiently until Captain Breeze sent the relief party as decided upon before leaving the yacht.

"It will be fully a month before we can hope to hear from him," said Mr. Goodrich, with a sigh. "Thirty days and nights spent in this miserable hole without tents or shelter of any description. By the way, how much food have we on hand?"

Brett and Sam, under the middy's directions, emptied the knapsacks still packed with provisions, and arranged the contents on the ground to facilitate counting. That taken from the bags now containing the treasure had been packed in the others before they entered the tunnel.

After a moment, Jack announced that the total supply on hand consisted of two hundred and forty rations, figured from the base used previously. This included coffee and sugar as well as meats.

"Two hundred and forty, eh? Let me see; that means sixteen days for five persons at three rations per day," mused Lovering. "And there are nine of us now. By Jove! it will only last us a little over eight days at that rate, or twenty-four days, consuming one ration each."

"We can keep body and soul together for a month

anyway with what we have," remarked Jack, cheerfully. "And for all we know, either one of the two men may return at any moment. We are not so badly off, after all. What if we didn't have any food or expect assistance?"

The middy's happy efforts to clear away the gloom cast over them by their precarious situation succeeded, and they set about arranging a place to spend the night with a fair display of good spirits. It was decided to build a fire in the same spot Garcia had selected, as it was partially protected by the curve in the walls. There were not enough blankets for all, so Brett rigged an ingenious screen of those on hand, and placed it as a shield against the wintry blasts.

A small quantity of food was doled out to each, just barely enough to satisfy the pangs of hunger, and then all who could snatched a few fitful hours of sleep as a temporary relief. A regular watch was set as a precaution against possible danger, but the isolated party rather welcomed intrusion, so it was not from the natives of the crater.

Jack and the young surgeon walked back and forth in front of the fire long after dark, talking in low tones over the eventful incidents of the day. They paused now and then to glance at the knapsacks containing the treasure, and each felt that he would gladly exchange the wealth for a surety that help would come in time.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ON THE CLIFF.

Shannon and Wilkins were old cronies and shipmates of many a cruise. They had braved the storms of the capes more times than they could remember, and sailed under every flag known to navigation. Thorough seamen in every respect, honest in their rude walk of life, and doing their simple duty without ostentation and desiring praise therefor, still they had their little faults like the rest of mankind.

After the expedition had disappeared up the passage, Wilkins hauled the rope to the top of the cliff, and prepared to make himself as comfortable as the circumstances would permit. Pitching his little tent a half-dozen yards from the edge, he placed the stores in it, and then, after the ancient custom of tarry followers of the deep, drew forth his cutty pipe for a quiet smoke.

To his great annoyance, he found that it was empty, and, furthermore, the plug of tobacco always deposited with solicitous care in the pocket of his dungaree trousers was gone.

Wilkins' first thought was of his friend on the other side of the chasm. They had loaned and borrowed that same article for ten long years, and he knew that his request would meet with a speedy response. After cast-

ing a glance in the chasm to see if any of the party was returning, he hurried to the place they had crossed that morning. From where he stood he could see Shannon leaning against a huge bowlder, calmly engaged in smoking his pipe. The sight of the blue wreaths curling above his friend's head caused his own longing to gain an added strength from envy, and he called out:

"I say there, Paddy! have ye a bit of 'bacca about ye? I have lost my plug."

"Hillo, Bill," replied the Irishman, strolling to the edge, and feeling in his pockets. "I have that, but it's a wee bit, an' won't fill more'n three poipes. Brett's got the rest. How'll I git it over there?"

"Just give it a toss, I'll catch it all right."

Shannon measured the distance with his eye, and, after looking at the small piece in his hand, shook his head doubtfully.

"It'll maybe drop in a crack, an' then we're shipwrecked sure, me bye. Hadn't ye better wait until thim fellers come back? It's too risky."

But Wilkins' determination only increased, and the bare thought of such a delay caused him to speedily cast about for a means to secure the coveted weed. The single heaving line used for hauling over the boatswain's chair was still stretched across the pit. That could be utilized with a little ingenuity. It had been reeved through a pully on each side, and therefore formed an endless rope. By fastening the tobacco to it with a piece of string, Wilkins could draw it over in a jiffy. Under

his directions Shannon prepared the transfer with a caution worthy of a crown diamond.

"Now, ye terrier, if ye lose this, I'll come over there and tan yer hide," he called out, making a signal for the other to commence pulling the line.

"All right, Paddy," replied his mate, laughingly. "I say; where's the nigger and the dog? Have they both skipped out on account of not liking your company? Ha, ha! I don't blame them."

"They have gone huntin' thim little yaller animiles what's called guanacas. Waroka, he sez something in his funny lingo, and started off wid a gun. I knowed what ever he meant, 'cause I seen one o' thim a few minutes back. Careful there, matie; don't yez lean over too—— Murther! he's gone!"

Uttering a cry of horror, the Irishman staggered back, and clasped both hands over his face. Wilkins had inclined too far over the edge in his eagerness, and, losing his balance, fell with a crash into the abyss. One long, shrill scream came to the ears of his friend, and then silence again.

Trembling in every limb, Shannon crawled to the brink and peered over. There was nothing in sight, save a mark here and there, where the body had struck against the sides, nor could he hear any sounds from below. He was alone.

Turning away sick at heart, he walked back to his tent, and cast himself on the ground just in front. Suddenly he thought of the consequences of the terrible accident

to the expedition. Jumping to his feet again, he walked hurriedly up and down in a state of great excitement.

"Pore Jim! he's beyant all help now," he muttered, sorrowfully. "An' it's brought trouble on us all. Whatever am I going to do about Mr. Goodrich, an' th' rest? The rope's over there out o' reach, an' I can't git it. Oh! woora, woora! it's the 'bacca as hez caused it all. There! begone wid ye!" Putting his heel on the pipe lying near by, he ground it into pieces.

"I wish th' naygur would come back. He'd be company, anyway, even if he couldn't talk to a feller. An' th' dog's as good as a deef an' dumb man wid his sympathy."

He returned to the chasm, drawn by some fascination he could not explain. The sun was getting high in the heavens, and it beamed down on him in friendly warmth, but he felt it not. The loss of his mate and the problem now confronting him made the poor fellow oblivious to all else. Glancing across, he could see the little tent and the rope coiled up nearby, but it was as much out of his reach as if it had been at the bottom of the sea. He knew it would take him at least seven days to obtain assistance from the yacht, but that it would ultimately have to be done was certain. He could accomplish nothing single-handed, nor without a rope.

"If I only could send worred to Captain Breeze, he'd have everything fixed in no toime, an' it would—why, the naygur, he's just th' ticket! It wouldn't take him a wink of yer eye to reach th' coast. Why don't he come, I wonder?"

Turning away, he walked hastily in the direction the Yaghan had taken several hours previous, with the hope that he might see him. After passing the tent he struck off to the left, but had hardly gone ten yards when he stopped suddenly and glanced at a spot on the edge of the large crevice, where they had ascended that morning.

"Be th' powers! I thought I saw a man's head there," he muttered, feeling for his revolver. It was not in his belt, and he then remembered leaving it near the stores. Backing cautiously toward the tent, he watched the place closely, then with an exclamation of excitement, turned to run. He was too late.

The sharp crack of a pistol shot rang out, and, throwing up his arms, Shannon stumbled and fell without a sound. Over in the direction of the crevice a little ring of smoke curled up and disappeared. Then, after a few moments, a man climbed slowly over the edge, and walked toward the body. His clothes were torn and soiled, and he moved with difficulty, as if injured in one of his limbs. The face seemed haggard, and the black beard fringing the chin was unkempt and ragged. It was Manuel Garcia!

Reaching Shannon's body, he spurned it with his foot, and then passed on to a little pile of canned provisions near the tent. Hurriedly opening several, he ate ravenously for a while. After satisfying his hunger, he looked under the canvas, but saw nothing to his fancy, except a blanket. Throwing it over his shoulder, Garcia limped back to the crack in the edge of the cliff, and after taking a last look around, lowered himself over the side.

Midday came and passed. The sun drew closer to the mountain peak toward the west, and then gradually disappeared, casting a fringe of golden bars athwart the sky. Just as these faded away, leaving a grayish light significant of darkness, the loud barking of a dog sounded, and Shag appeared, followed by the native.

The intelligent animal rushed up to the body, and, throwing back his head, gave vent to a long, mournful howl. Waroka stopped suddenly on seeing Shannon, and glanced swiftly from side to side. Then, stooping over, he felt carefully for the wound. After a moment's examination, he ran to the tent and returned immediately with some water, which he used in bathing the pallid face.

The Yaghan labored long and earnestly, until at last, after almost giving it up in despair, he noticed signs of returning consciousness. He redoubled his efforts, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the wounded man open his eyes. Shannon tried to arise, but the task was too much for his present strength.

"What is the matter? Who was—ugh!" Groaning feebly, he fell back, and then saw Waroka for the first time. "Why, it's the naygur. I say, old man, who was it shot—— Ah! what's the use in talkin' to the likes of him, he don't understand."

The native said something in his peculiar dialect, but Shannon only shook his head; then Waroka made a motion as if aiming a revolver, and pointed toward the crevice.

The Irishman nodded eagerly and repeated the panto-

mime, at the same time unconsciously explaining the occurrence in words. Waroka at last appeared satisfied, and tapped his revolver with a meaning smile.

"Good for ye!" exclaimed Shannon. "Go an' kill the murderin' villain, an' I'll be yer friend fur life." Feeling a spot on his head, he continued: "It was a narrow escape an' no mistake. The thickness of a hair nearer, an' I'd be a dead Mick. Now, if I can git this feller to help me to the tent, I'll do well fur th' night. By morning thim people ought to be back, an' then I'll go down an' talk to thim over th' pit. We will have to kape a sharp lookout in case that Spaniard—fur I recognized his mug—comes back ag'in to finish his job."

The Yaghan assisted him under the canvas, and prepared a little cold food for both. Then, carrying his revolver in readiness, marched up and down the edge of the crevice, accompanied by Shag, until long after dark.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE END OF GARCIA.

The encampment was astir early next morning. In fact, there was no inducement to sleep, even to those who had stood watch during the night. The gravity of their position was felt more strongly than at any time since the discovery. The gnawing pangs of hunger had brought the truth before them in a manner not to be denied.

Another danger threatened the party. Their supply of firewood was not sufficient for one more day. It had only consisted of a few decayed branches, blown into the passage at odd times, and all they had been able to pick up after a diligent search was barely a couple of armsful. The temperature in the tunnel-like crevice seemed several degrees lower than on the cliffs, and even at midday proved uncomfortable. It would not have been felt so much if they had ample food, but the scant ration served out offered little assistance in combating the new enemy.

The depressing effect of their situation was beginning to tell on the party. Even Jack, light-hearted and merry as a general rule, seemed more grave than his wont on awakening from a troubled sleep that morning. This feeling was the natural expression of resentment at an untoward fate.

Circumstances have a deal to do with one's spiritual barometer. It is easy to tint life's canvas a rosy hue when the brush is colored by pleasant gifts and peaceful days, but the darker shadows of misfortune can often blur the picture.

"It has resolved itself into this," said George, walking toward the brink of the chasm with the middy and Mr. Goodrich. "We are all right, if we can manage to exist until the relief expedition is sent out by Captain Breeze. It will no doubt entail considerable suffering upon all, especially on account of the lack of fuel, but while there is the hope of ultimate rescue before us, even if it is delayed for thirty days, we can surely stand a little discomfort."

"There is one thing certain," remarked Jack. "We can depend on the skipper. He will carry out his instructions to the letter, if it costs him his life."

"Yes; Breeze will do his duty," admitted Mr. Goodrich. "And if nothing happens, we will see the rescuing party by the time agreed upon. But we are going to have a close call of it."

"The limit of human endurance is not yet reached, sir," said Clark, joining them. "The unwritten history of the sea would show a number of almost incredible examples of existence under terrible circumstances."

While he was speaking, Jack had been gazing intently across to where the opposite passage made the abrupt curve. Without turning to the others, he said, suddenly:

"Keep quiet, and don't look yet. I saw a man's face

peering at us from the other side. If I am not mistaken, it is Garcia. Continue talking, and I will watch."

Cautiously putting his hand behind, Gordon drew a revolver from his belt, and cocked it. George began speaking in an ordinary tone of voice, and to heighten further the delusion, pointed overhead.

The middy looked around in an unconcerned manner, but took care to direct a casual glance at the spot where he had seen the face. It was no longer there, and, after waiting several minutes, Jack began to believe he had been deceived.

"I was certain I saw some one over there," he finally remarked, with a laugh. "But it might have——"

"There he is!" cried George, pointing to the curve.

The figure of a man stepped into view, and stood waving a white rag over his head.

"It's the chief!" avowed Clark, quickly. "See, he's showing a flag of truce, and wants to speak with us."

Just then they heard a shout from the rear, and the three Spaniards rushed down to the edge of the chasm, and held out their arms to Garcia, imploringly.

The ex-mutineeer did not approach any nearer the chasm, but stood where he had first shown himself. The distance between them was not more than fifty yards, and they could see his face plainly. He appeared to be pleased at something, and regarded the party with a peculiar smile. With a tacit understanding they waited for him to speak first. For the space of a moment they remained thus, forming an impressive tableau, then the Spaniard broke the silence.

"Mr. Goodrich, and you, my brave young officers," he began, an exultant look on his evil countenance. "I am sorry to see you in such a dangerous position. It is a pity that such daring treasure hunters should be caged in a trap which has no doors. You wanted gold, and you ran your head in a noose which I am going to loosen for you. My tender heart will not permit me to leave you to the fate of starvation. See, here is a rope! It will bridge the pit and open the way to freedom for all. Now, I want to talk a little first, and then I'll let you out. Oh! yes; I'll just throw over the end, and you can sail away with the gold, and live forever after like kings. Good for evil is my motto. You were going to deliver me to the executioner, and in repayment I will give you life!"

While he was making this extraordinary speech, Jack glanced meaningly at Lovering. They were not deceived by his smooth words, and the middy quietly fingered his revolver with a significant movement. By this time every member of the little party had gathered on the brink of the pit, an expectant audience.

Mr. Goodrich looked perplexed. He did not know whether the Spaniard was in earnest or not. His abhorrence of the man made the idea of accepting such a service at his hands particularly disagreeable, but they were undoubtedly not in a position to refuse the service. However, he had no further time for considering the subject. Garcia stood playfully exhibiting the rope with its iron grapnel at the end for a moment, then continued:

"I see you have saved all my poor men from those dare-

devils except one. I suppose Luna was lost, eh? Well, it's too bad, but it can't be helped. Now, I want to ask you an important question. Did you get any of the gold?"

"Yes, Garcia," replied Mr. Goodrich, quickly. "We have secured some, part of which will be yours if you assist us in escaping from this hole."

The Spaniard threw back his head and laughed. It had a mirthless sound, and soon ceased, but it was enough to cause Jack to set his teeth with sudden anger, and almost reveal the revolver he held in readiness behind him.

"You will give me part of it, eh?" replied Garcia, softly rubbing his hands. "Ah! generous soul! In return for the poor services I will render you, I am to be paid in my own gold. Well, I know a trick worth two of that." He paused slightly, then, his whole manner changing, shook his fist at them, and shouted vindictively: "Part of it? I am to be paid a little of the treasure! After toiling and suffering untold hardships for years; after being shot and almost drowned, I am to be rewarded with a trifle, while you take the lion's share.

"Stay and rot where you are, thieves! Starve! while I watch your dying agonies, and count the hours bringing the time when I can cross over and get my treasure at last! I want to——"

Crack!

The report of a revolver echoed through the passage, and before the sound had died away, they saw the Spaniard totter and fall against the rocky side. He wavered

there, clinging desperately to a projecting point, but at last his hold relaxed and he sank to the ground.

On the opposite side of the pit there was a state of wild excitement. The fatal shot had not been fired from there. Jack still held his weapon concealed, and the others had not drawn theirs. Just as their surprise reached its greatest pitch, two men and a dog came into view and ran quickly to the edge of the pit.

They were Shannon, Waroka and Shag!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE TREASURE.

The cheer that came from the anxious watchers when they saw the hour of their deliverance so near at hand, made the walls of the passage ring. Shannon returned it with a hearty good-will, and then called out:

"Hillo, there! I am murtherin' glad to see yez. Would ye be after havin' the rope to oncet? Och! what a question! but it's the' cut in me head which makes me loony loike."

"Shannon, you never appeared so handsome in all your life," laughed Jack, in the exuberance of high spirits. "But you will look even better when we reach the other side."

"Ah! but it's jokin' ye are, Mister Gordon," replied the delighted sailor. "Its' the gilded frame work of the circumstances phat enhances me beauty. Howsomever, we'll talk about that later on. I'll first see if that villain up there can do any more harm, then I'll sind the naygur for the boatswain's chair an' hev yez out o' that in the twinklin' of a pig's nose."

Walking to where the Spaniard lay doubled up at the base of the wall, he held his revolver in readiness and peered at the upturned face. One glance was sufficient; the murderer and mutineer, the breaker of the laws of

God and man, the cause of all their misfortunes and trouble, had gone to his last account. The glint of gold had entered his soul and awakened there a lust which knew no satisfying, but a just retribution had at last overtaken him. He richly merited his fate.

Taking the body, Shannon and Waroka unceremoniously dragged it to the brink of the chasm and, in the presence of the spectators on the other side, dropped it into the mysterious abyss.

"A fitting burial!" exclaimed Lovering, grimly, and he echoed the sentiments of all.

In the course of an hour the transfer of the party was safely accomplished. When the last man had passed over the swaying rope, old Brett cut their end and allowed it to swing out of reach, forever severing their communication with the golden crater and its mysteries.

The old sailor was sent with the Spaniards to the top of the cliff for the tents and stores, the latter being absolutely necessary for their homeward journey. On being told of Wilkins' tragic death, the party expressed their sorrow, and Mr. Goodrich evinced his determination to provide for the unfortunate man's family. Waroka was easily persuaded to accompany them to the yacht, and in fact seemed to exhibit a disinclination to leave them at all. This caused Jack to vaguely outline a plan for carrying the native to Buenos Ayres. He was intelligent for his race, was young, and had proved a faithful ally. Then the novelty of having a Yaghan retainer had its weight.

The return to the coast was made without incidents.

The fatigue of travel was lost in the promise of pleasures awaiting them, and when the supplies ended on the day before their arrival, they only tightened their belts and took longer strides, buoyed up by dreams of that bountiful table groaning under its weight of good cheer.

At sunrise of the third day, after a forced march during half the night, they emerged from the evergreen forest and stepped silently to the beach. To their unbounded joy the yacht was still riding at her old anchorage, and never did a fabric of iron and wood look so beautiful as the graceful hull of the *Marie* to her owner and his party. Smoke was pouring from the galley pipe, and as it eddied and wavered through the mizzen rigging it seemed to form the fingers of a beckoning hand, bidding them welcome. Sam's eyes glistened with joy at the sight, but he could only smack his capacious lips and rub the commissary department of his anatomy.

There was only one man visible on deck, a sailor scrubbing the forecastle hatch. The skipper's door was open, but he was probably at breakfast, little dreaming of the agreeable surprise awaiting them.

At last Jack, unable to stand it longer, placed his hands to his mouth, and shouted at the top of his voice:

"*Marie* ahoy-y-y!"

The sailor forward dropped his brush, and, after staring at him a moment in amazement, ran aft toward the companion hatch, but before reaching there, Captain Breeze's familiar form appeared on deck. They could see him throw up both hands, and then execute the first steps of an intricate hornpipe, and then, echoing across

the waters came a whoop which would have done credit to an Indian.

In an instant the deck was alive with men. Some rushed aft, and lowered both boats, while others hoisted flags at the main and mizzen. Presently, just before the keels of the skiff and quarter boat grated on the sand, a loud report sounded from the howitzer amidships. It was followed by another, and then another, until the impatient watchers on shore counted fifteen—a commodore's salute.

It would take a pen dipped in a sympathetic ink to aptly describe the meeting between Marie and her father. In the dry phraseology of legal documents, the party of the first part wept silently and with emphasis, while the party of the second part wiped away several drops of unbidden moisture, ably assisted by the majority of those at his elbow. Manchita came in for her share of attention, notably from the young surgeon, who shook hands with a vigor only used successfully at a pump handle. After the first greeting was over and preliminary explanations gone through with, Mr. Goodrich turned to the skipper, and said:

"Breeze, start fires at once and get under way. Don't delay, as every moment spent in sight of this land is a moment of misery to me."

"Ay, ay, commodore! We'll be out o' sight long before sunset. But what'll ye do with them fellers' boat—leave it here?"

The old gentleman asked Clark if he wanted it, and, on

receiving a reply in the negative, told the captain to let it remain at anchor in the little bay.

"It may prove a blessing to some shipwrecked sailors, unfortunate enough to be cast away on this coast," he added, and then, with a generosity characteristic of the man, told Breeze to stock the cabin with a quantity of canned provisions and a sail.

Jack succeeded in persuading Waroka to accompany them, after gaining Mr. Goodrich's consent. The native demurred at first, being evidently alarmed at the unaccustomed sights on board the yacht, but finally agreed on condition that he could return some day to see his people. The Spaniards were placed with the crew, and seemed satisfied to escape from the island under any circumstances.

Shortly after twelve o'clock the *Marie* slowly forged her way out through the passage near the reef, and again breasted the blue waters of the Atlantic. Taking advantage of a favorable breeze, all sails were set, and, with the screw rapidly urging her on, soon had the islands of Terra del Fuego a dark blotch on the distance horizon.

Aft on the quarter deck were gathered a group of interested spectators watching it slowly fade away until at last, just as the faint outlines were lost in the misty depths of sea and sky, Mr. Goodrich removed his hat, and said, solemnly:

"May we never be unfortunate enough to look on that land again."

"Amen!" echoed the young officers, fervently.

At the old gentleman's request, the entire party ad-

journed to the cabin, where, after seeing them seated around the center table, he brought forth the knapsacks containing the treasure.

"Now, my friends," he began, emptying the contents into one huge pile, "that we have, like the old Romans, came, saw, and conquered, we will do what naturally follows, count the spoils. I know you are anxious on the subject, and I do not blame you. We have passed through enough to be entitled to a sufficient recompense. We shall see whether we have it."

Under his directions, Jack and Lovering weighed the gold, while he, assisted by Clark, assorted the stones. Marie kept tally of the different results. Many were the expressions of admiration at the beauty of the diamonds, even in their rough condition, and they were none too enthusiastic.

Mr. Goodrich, quietly admitting that he had served an apprenticeship at the trade, separated and priced them with a skill proving his assertion. After a full hour's work, the old gentleman took the schedule and announced the following results:

"I find that the approximate value of the gold, at current prices, is thirty-six thousand dollars. Not so bad, after all, eh? But our real wealth will come from these stones. You will be surprised when I tell you that, all in all, large and small, we have here three hundred and sevnty, which means, computing the carats," here he hesiated, and, beaming at them over his glasses, continued slowly; "a total of over eight hundred thousand dollars!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

The silence in the cabin, following his words, remained unbroken for a brief moment, then from the other end of the table came a voice, husky with excitement:

"Well, I'll be teetotally keel-hauled! Commodore ye air foolin', ain't ye?"

Arising from his seat, the skipper leaned over toward them, and, at the sight of the rugged, weather-beaten countenance, with its staring eyes and open mouth, caused them to shout with laughter.

"No; that is the approximate value, Breeze. Of course, the price might vary a little on sale, but in round figures I believe the total will not fall far short of that amount.

"Now, I think we had better figure the division," continued Mr. Goodrich, after quietly enjoying the varying expressions of astonishment and pleasure on the countenances of his listeners. "Of this total we will set apart a certain sum for Wilkins' family and members of the crew. What do you say to five thousand for the first, and double that amount to be divided among those who did not take part in the expedition, including Mr. Watts and Adams?"

"Just as you say, sir," acquiesced Jack, who then asked: "Now for our old friend here, the master of the yacht."

"Ah! I have provided for him," smiled the old gentleman, turning to the skipper with twinkling eyes. "Captain Breeze, in repayment for your services, and as a token of our regard, we beg you to accept the sum of twenty thousand dollars."

The worthy old sailor stared at him for a moment, then answered, huskily:

"No—no, commodore; I couldn't see my way clear to taking of it. You pay me liberally for doin' my dooty, an' if I should happen to put a leetle more interest in it than usual, I do so in part payment for your kindness to me."

"Tut, tut, sir! I thought you always obeyed orders. A refusal will mean mutiny, rank mutiny, sir, and I shall certainly run you over to the authorities in Buenos Ayres for punishment. Eh, Jack?"

"Hang him to the yard arm at once," replied the middy, promptly. "Such an outrageous contempt of his lawful orders cannot be tolerated. Write it in the logbook something like this: 'On this day and date, in latitude ——, longitude ——, William Breeze, master of the steam yacht *Marie*, did willfully and knowingly refuse to——"

"Avast there, Jack!" shouted the skipper, unable to stand it longer. "I'll never be accused of refusing dooty, an', if ye put it that way, I'll accept, but just as soon as we reach port, I warn ye I'll enter a protest at the 'Merican Consul's."

"If you threaten us in that manner, we will compel you to take all of it," retorted Jack.

"Now for the others," interrupted Mr. Goodrich. "I

have set down five thousand each for Brett and Shannon, and half that amount for Sam and William, also one thousand each to the Spaniards. That will leave about eight hundred thousand to be divided among the principals, or two hundred thousand each for Clark, Lovering, Gordon and myself."

"What about the expenses of the expedition? That should come out of the total," said George.

"No, I won't allow that," quickly replied the old gentleman, shaking his head. "It amounts to very little more than the actual running of the yacht, and need not be mentioned."

"Two hundred thousand dollars. That's a big sum of money," said Jack, slowly. "A fellow can do a great deal of good with that. It is more money than I ever expected or hoped to own."

A vision of the little cottage home in that far Western village, where a gray-haired old lady, with a sweet, motherly face waited to welcome him after the long cruise, came before his eyes. No more straitened circumstances for her now; no worry nor trouble to seam that loving countenance with marks of care. No; but what joy and pride would be his when he knelt down before her and poured all that wealth into the arms that had sheltered him through sorrow and pain and the ills of life.

Rising from the table, he walked over, and, placing his hand on the old gentleman's shoulder, said:

"We owe everything to your generosity, sir. I—I—really, I cannot tell you how much I thank you for your kindness."

"Don't you dare to try it, young man," laughed Mr. Goodrich; "or I'll do with you what was recommended for the captain, here."

Clark had sat quietly listening to the conversation. He was literally overwhelmed at the idea of his good fortune, and could scarcely realize it. The sudden jump from comparative poverty to affluence has turned stronger heads than his, and the wild and visionary schemes passing through his thoughts are not to be wondered at.

It was long after midnight before the party retired. Such a subject offers many corners on which to hang one's opinions, and it is probable that if the fatigue of the preceding night had not asserted itself, they would have talked until daylight.

During the remainder of the trip to Buenos Ayres nothing occurred out of the common, and exactly thirty-five days after leaving the Boca, the *Maria* again tied up alongside the docks. The *Wampum* had sailed several weeks previous for Rio Janeiro, a fact rather regretted by the young officers, as they wished to see their shipmates before departing for the United States to spend the balance of their furloughs.

The Spaniards, filled with gratitude for the money, went ashore on the first day in port, and took steamer for their native land. Clark accepted an invitation to accompany our friends to Boston on the *Marie*, to the great satisfaction of the skipper, who had taken a liking to the sturdy young American. After coaling and taking in stores, they started on the long voyage home, arriving there without mishap one month later.

The entire party went to Mr. Goodrich's palatial residence near the city for a stay of several days, after which time Jack and Lovering were to leave for their home. Next day the old gentleman visited Boston, and succeeded in speedily disposing of the treasures at a price which slightly exceeded his first valuation. On the evening before the young officers were to depart, he called a family gathering in the old mansion, and presented each with a check for their share of the proceeds. Those interested had been called up from the yacht, and the scene soon took on the aspect of a celebration.

Before the commencement of festivities, Mr. Goodrich stated that he had an important announcement to make. Taking Manchita by the hand, he said:

"My dear young friends, I have resolved to make a very worthy use of half the share coming to me. It is my intention to give my little adopted daughter here one hundred thousand dollars as her dowry."

There was no reason why he should glance at George, nor why that collected young gentleman should display a very rosy glow in his cheeks, but such was the case, and Jack cannot be blamed for laughing softly thereat. As for the lady, it is not pertinent to speak of her evident embarrassment.

Lovering had his revenge next day, when, *en route* to the station, the middy created three separate excuses for returning to the house, each time shaking Marie's hand with increased fervor.

Little more remains to be said. Captain Breeze pur-

chased a stanch new vessel, and placed old Brett as first officer of her, after having at last overcome that ancient mariner's modesty. He remained in charge of the yacht, declaring that even the briny deep itself could not drive him out of it.

Clark engaged in business near his home, and, in the days of his prosperity, did much to better the condition of seafaring men. Shannon remained in the old gentleman's service, a faithful adherent of the house, and grew to be an object of great and venerating interest to the youth of the neighborhood to whom he spun wondrous tales of adventures with ever increasing effect.

Sam and Shag shifted the scenes of their frolics to the country house, and the former never failed to show his terror at the mere mention of the golden crater and its people.

Several months after their arrival, the young officers were invited to deliver a lecture at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, on their discoveries, which they did to the great advancement of science, and the edification of Waroka, who was exhibited as an adjunct to the discourse.

Jack and Lovering are still in the service, devoted to their professions. They never let slip an opportunity for calling at the Goodrich mansion, where they talk over the memorable journey through Terra del Fuego, and spend the hours at other equally pleasant pastimes.

Their last visit—only the other day—was the occasion of an interesting scene in the library, when the young of-

ficers held an interview with the "commodore" which caused their hearts to beat with a fervor never displayed in the heat of battle. That their charge was successful can be inferred from an announcement made in due course to their circle of mutual friends.

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